

Iron Age Communities in Britain

An account of England, Scotland and Wales from
the seventh century BC until the Roman Conquest

Barry Cunliffe

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BAR	British Archaeological Reports
<i>BG</i>	<i>Bello Gallico</i> (Julius Caesar's
	<i>Commentaries</i> on his Gallic War)
CCI	Celtic Coin Index (Institute of
	Archaeology, University of Oxford;
	(http://www.arch.ox.ac.uk/coins/ccindex.htm)
CRAAGS	Committee for Rescue Archaeology
	in Avon, Gloucestershire and
	Somerset
<i>DMC</i>	<i>Devizes Museum Catalogue</i>
<i>Inv. Arch. GB</i>	<i>Inventaria Archaeologica (Great</i>
	<i>Britain)</i>
RCAHMW	Royal Commission on the Ancient
	and Historical Monuments of
	Wales
RCHME	Royal Commission on the
	Historical Monuments of England
RCHM(S)	Royal Commission on Historical
	Monuments (Scotland)
<i>VCH</i>	<i>Victoria County Histories</i>

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Who the first inhabitants of Britain were, whether natives or immigrants, remains obscure; one must remember we are dealing with barbarians.

Tacitus, *Agricola*, xi

Preface

The preparation of this fourth edition of *Iron Age Communities* has been no mean task. Since the third edition was written fourteen years ago Iron Age scholarship has continued to develop vigorously, generating a flood of new publications ranging from definitive reports of large-scale excavations and major corpora to critical overviews and conference proceedings. In all about 800 publications of varying length and significance have had to be considered, and of these some 380 have been added to the bibliography. Most of the publications are reports of fieldwork and excavation resulting, increasingly, from rescue work in advance of development, and this is only a fraction of what has actually been undertaken and remains unpublished in the 'grey literature' of reports to developers. This exponential growth in data is to be welcomed but it does bring with it problems of selection. To keep this book within reasonable bounds of size many sites which could justly claim to be informative have had to be omitted. The sites specifically referred to here, and listed with principal references in Appendix C, are only a small selection of those available in publication, but they do, I believe, include all the major discoveries upon which our knowledge of Iron Age society is founded.

The first edition of this book was conceived in 1969, written in 1971 and published three years later. Over the last thirty years or so our perceptions of the past have changed dramatically. In the late 1960s we were trying to rid ourselves of old 'invasionist' models which explained change in terms of incoming waves of marauders. In more recent years there have been attempts to get into the minds of the Iron Age communities in hope of being able to view the world as they perceived it. Thus, in the literature, 'invaders' and 'defences' have given way to 'agency' and 'cosmologies' – fashions change as the study advances. No doubt in thirty years' time future generations of archaeologists will look with mild amusement at our current preoccupations. Yet behind it all lies a rapidly growing base of solid data and it is this, or more correctly a selection of it, that forms the core of this book.

I have retained the broad structure of the text much as it was in the third edition but have made a number of readjustments, particularly to the chapters dealing with regional groupings (chapters 4 and 5), and have now treated the settlement patterns in western and northern

Britain in separate chapters (chapters 13 and 14). Throughout, new material has been included, usually as additions but sometimes replacing older texts. To prevent the book from becoming too unwieldy, space has been saved by omitting the accretion of old prefaces, on the grounds of their being an unnecessary self-indulgence, and by leaving out the lists of radiocarbon dates which, to remain of use, would have had to have been doubled or trebled in length. The desultory footnotes have also been excised. The reformatting and updating of the illustrations has allowed some additional economies of space. Yet in spite of all these efforts the book has grown – I can only blame the energy and productivity of the many archaeologists whose new researches are daily adding so much.

This new edition was prepared in 2003 and takes note of all published material available to me up to August 2003. I could not have completed this work without the help of the many colleagues who have answered my queries and offered much good advice. They are too many to name but I would particularly like to thank Philip de Jersey for providing the updated maps of coin distributions based on the Celtic Coin Index which he maintains at Oxford and Nigel MacPherson Grant, Peter Couldrey and Nigel Brown for providing unpublished material from their researches on the pottery of Kent and Essex. Finally my heartfelt thanks go to three of my colleagues at the Institute of Archaeology at Oxford who have shared the burden of production. Ian Cartwright has produced a range of new photographic prints, Alison Wilkins has skilfully reformatted the line illustrations and drawn many that are new, while Lynda Smithson has tirelessly laboured to translate my scribbled texts into an immaculate and consistent word-processed text and has insisted on overhauling my idiosyncratic system of bibliographic abbreviations. Without the assurance of their support I would never have embarked upon this fourth edition.

Barry Cunliffe
Oxford
November 2003

Part I

Introduction

1

The beginnings of Iron Age studies

It is not proposed in this chapter to indulge in an extensive and somewhat incestuous examination of the growth of Iron Age studies in Britain simply for the sake of conventional completeness, nor for the specious exercise of holding up to ridicule the views of previous generations who have written on the subject. But some idea of how patterns of thought have developed to their present state is essential, not only because the models of the past have necessarily influenced the interpretations, and indeed the gathering, of the facts, but also because current views may tend to overreact against established dogma.

That an 'Iron Age' existed at all was suggested by the Danish archaeologist C.J. Thomsen, in a book published in 1836, but it was not until G. Ramsauer's excavation at Hallstatt, between 1846 and 1862, and the discoveries made at La Tène in 1858, that any permanent chronological divisions could be made. Then followed several schemes: C. Schumacher divided the Hallstatt material into four groups: A (1000–800 BC), B (800–700), C (700–600) and D (600–500); while G.O.A. Montelius, working on French discoveries, propounded three periods for the La Tène epoch: I (400–250 BC), II (250–150 BC) and III (150–1 BC). Subsequently P. Reinecke, J. Déchelette, R. Viollier and others evolved finer and differing classifications influenced by new material and by regional considerations. It was against this background that the British finds came to be interpreted.

The first half of the nineteenth century saw the gradual amassing in museums and private collections of quantities of Iron Age finds, usually tools, weapons and art objects, brought together by casual discovery and by the pilferings of the early barrow diggers like the Revd E.W. Stillingfleet, who managed to excavate between 100 and 200 barrows of the Arras culture between 1815 and 1817. Barrow-sacking in high Victorian style continued to produce Iron Age finds from east Yorkshire throughout the century, but ended with the carefully observed researches of J.R. Mortimer, published between 1895 and 1911. Outside Yorkshire the British Iron Age was not susceptible to this type of acquisitive excavation, and the bulk of the finds continued to be made by accident. The emphasis of the early

collectors was naturally enough upon works of art. In 1857, the year before the discovery at La Tène, J. Thurnham listed objects of 'Late British Art', and even six years later, when Sir Wollaston Franks illustrated a series of La Tène objects at the British Museum, he was forced to refer to them as 'Late Keltic' for want of a more precise terminology. With the development of the Continental Hallstatt and La Tène classifications after 1872, however, British archaeologists were provided with a simple system with which to compare their own material; thus gradually the European nomenclature gained acceptance.

In parallel with the early archaeological discoveries linguists were developing theories about the peopling of Britain. Most influential among them was Sir John Rhys, the Jesus Professor of Celtic at the University of Oxford. In 1882 the first edition of his seminal book *Early Britain: Celtic Britain* was published (with subsequent editions in 1884 and 1904) in which he argued that Goidelic Celts from the Continent spread into southern Britain and later Ireland, to be replaced in Britain by a second invasion, this time of Brythonic Celts. The two invasions accounted for the two main divisions of Celtic speech in the British Isles. Rhys' model, which owes much to Edward Lhuyd (1660–1709), provided a structure against which the archaeological material was to be compared.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, excavations began to be mounted on occupation sites and hillforts in an attempt to understand the people and their way of life. This was a marked advance on the somewhat sterile art-historical approach. Between 1857 and 1858 the first large-scale excavation of a settlement site was undertaken at Standlake in Oxfordshire by Stephen Stone, in advance of gravel-working. Altogether 134 pits were exposed, and were duly reported to the Society of Antiquaries. Ten years after the Standlake excavation, a similar area of Iron Age settlement was cleared at Highfield, Fisherton, near Salisbury. At both sites it was naturally the more obvious features such as pits and gullies that were examined, but quantities of occupation rubbish were recovered and gradually the nature of Iron Age peasant settlement began to force itself on the attention of an archaeological world hitherto blinded by the quality of a few art objects.

The next major advances were made by General A.H.L.F. Pitt Rivers. Following a meticulously recorded but relatively small-scale excavation at the Caburn, Sussex, in 1877–8, during which he had sectioned the ramparts as well as clearing out pits ([Figure 1.1](#)), he finally turned his attention to his Cranborne Chase estates, where between 1880 and 1890 he totally excavated the two settlements of Woodcuts and Rotherley Down, and sampled the hillfort at

Winklebury, Wilts. (Pitt Rivers 1887, 1888). His work was of an exceptionally high standard and was published in a detailed manner never before achieved. It emphasized two things above all: the value of considering the commonly occurring debris of occupation as the principal means by which people and their lives could be reconstructed, and the importance of large-scale regional studies.

The last decade of the nineteenth century saw the unremitting development of these two principles. In Devon the Dartmoor Exploration Committee was set up in 1894, and within the first ten years of its existence had examined twenty sites and excavated nearly 150 hut circles, under the direction of S. Baring-Gould. At the turn of the century Baring-Gould extended his interests into south-west Wales with the excavations of the hillforts of St David's Head and Moel Trigarn. Other hillforts were now receiving attention: excavations at Worlebury in Somerset were finally published in 1902 at the same time as the first adequate consideration of Bigbury in Kent.

Pitt Rivers' dictum of large-scale excavation was extended into Somerset by his assistant H. St George Gray who, in conjunction with A. Bulleid, began the famous excavations at the so-called Glastonbury Lake Village in 1892, work which was to continue until 1907 and was finally published in 1911 and 1917 (Coles, Goodall and Minnitt 1992). Nor were regional studies neglected: in Wiltshire Benjamin Cunnington and his wife Maud undertook annually an impressive series of excavations: Oliver's Camp (published 1908), Oare (1909), Knap Hill (1911), Casterley Camp (1913) and Lidbury (1917), but the most famous of all was their work at All Cannings Cross between 1911 and 1922, finally published in 1923. A two-year programme at Hengistbury Head started in 1911 (Bushe-Fox 1915); excavations began on the Somerset village of Meare under the direction of Bulleid and Gray in 1910, and between 1908 and 1912 ([Figure 1.2](#)) the cave of Wookey Hole was carefully examined (Balch 1914) ([Figure 1.3](#)).



Figure 1.1 Antiquities from Mount Caburn, Sussex (source: reproduced from Pitt Rivers 1881, pl. XXV).



Figure 1.2 Excavations at Meare Village East, Somerset, August 1935. *St George Gray stands on the left (photograph: Somerset County Museum Service and Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society).*

After the First World War, discoveries continued to be made and reported in increasing numbers: Hallstatt style pottery from Eastbourne, excavations at Abington Pigotts in Cambridgeshire, Park Brow in Sussex and Fifield Bavant in Wiltshire, all in 1924, and excavations at Swallowcliffe Down and Figsbury in Wiltshire in 1925. Thus by the year of publication of the second edition of the British Museum's *Guide to the Antiquities of the Early Iron Age* (Smith 1925), a vast collection of material – common artefacts – had been amassed to redress the balance of the collectors' pieces, and it is much to the credit of Reginald Smith, the *Guide's* compiler and a Deputy Keeper of the Museum, that so much was said of these common things. Iron Age communities were at last being considered in all their aspects.

With the rapid increase in the bulk of the potential evidence, classifications and interpretation developed in parallel. The turning point was undoubtedly the discovery in 1886 of the Belgic cemetery at Aylesford and its publication four years later by A.J. (later Sir Arthur) Evans ([Figure 1.4](#)). The report was an outstanding contribution to Iron Age studies: in it Evans characterized the Aylesford people, showing their differences from the inhabitants of the rest of Britain, and tracing

their immediate origins to northern France and ultimately back through the Marnian culture to the Illyro-Italic cultures of the fifth century. After a masterly consideration of the metalwork, he concluded that the Aylesford cemetery dated to after 150 BC and went on to link the Aylesford culture to the statement by Caesar that the coastal parts of Britain had been settled by Belgic invaders. In spite of a somewhat cursory treatment of the archaeological evidence by T. Rice Holmes in his famous work *Ancient Britain and the Invasions of Julius Caesar* (1907), Evans' conclusions were widely accepted and further consolidated by Reginald Smith's publication of the rich Belgic grave groups from Welwyn in 1912. Some geographical precision was given to the distribution of the Aylesford culture by Sir Cyril Fox in his *Archaeology of the Cambridge Region* (1923), but he retained reservations about its exact identity. New discoveries of a major cemetery at Swarling, Kent, in 1921 and its subsequent publication by J.P. Bushe-Fox in 1925, however, firmly established the Aylesford-Swarling culture as an intrusive element but refined Evans' dating, showing that there was nothing found with the burials earlier than 75 BC.

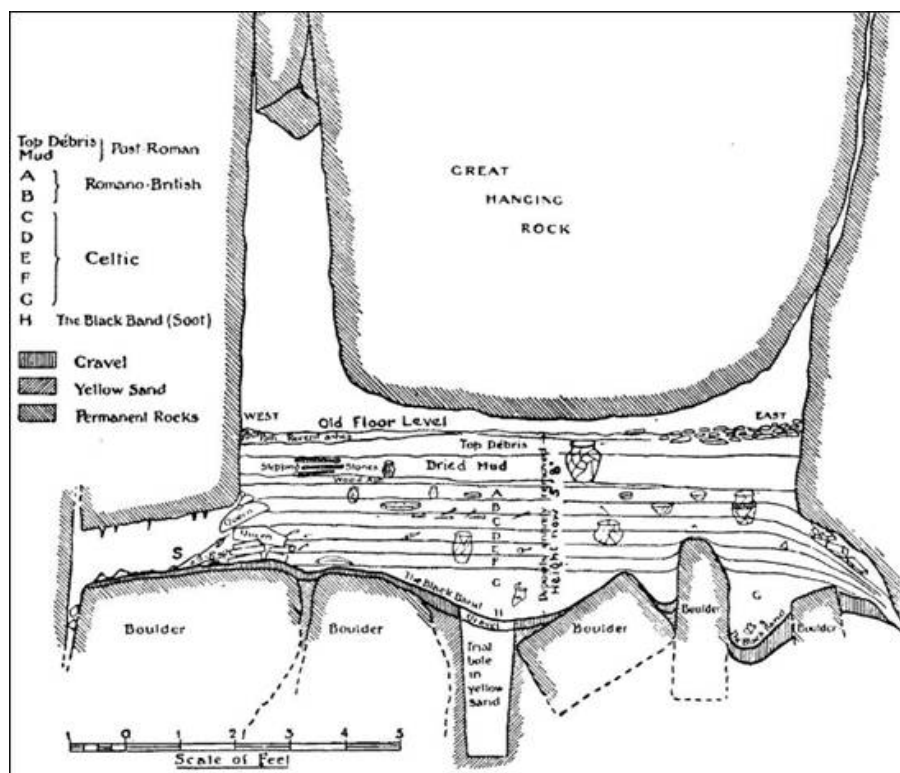


Figure 1.3 Stratified Iron Age deposits at Wookey Hole, Somerset (source:

reproduced from Balch 1914, pl. IX).

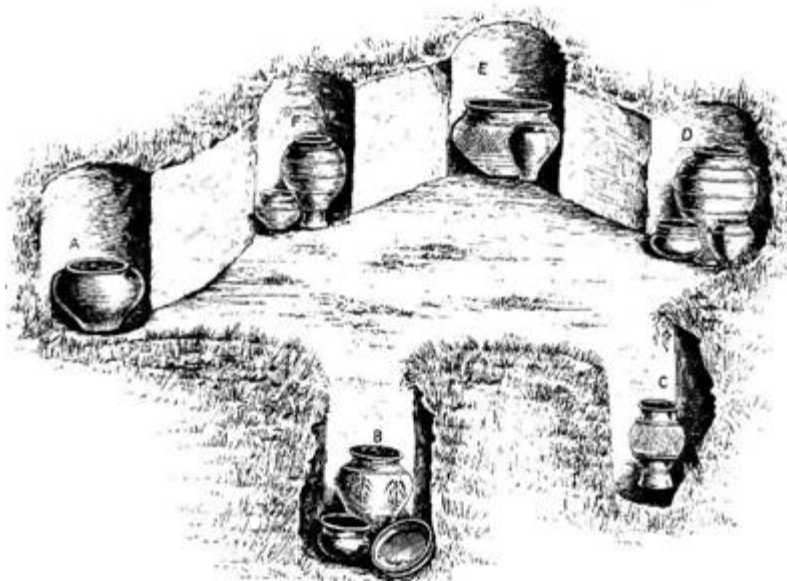


Figure 1.4 The Aylesford cemetery, Kent (source: reproduced from A.J. Evans 1890, Figures 1 and 4).

With the demonstrable reality of a Belgic invasion and the growing awareness of the intrusive nature of the Arras culture represented in

the La Tène style barrow cemeteries of Yorkshire, a climate of opinion arose in the first two decades of the twentieth century which considered invasion to be the principal, and sometimes the sole, cause of change. Such views were well rooted in the ideology of Victorian imperialism: after all, nineteenth-century colonial history could produce many striking parallels. In 1912, J. Abercromby suggested that the so-called Deverel–Rimbury urns were introduced into Britain from the Lausitz culture area of central Europe between 700 and 650 BC, and ten years later O.G.S. Crawford developed the invasion theory further by suggesting that the immigrants were Goidelic Celts, but had them arrive a century or so earlier, bringing with them weapon-types which characterized the Late Bronze Age. H. Peake elaborated the idea still further in *The Bronze Age and the Celtic World* (1922) in which, arguing principally from the evidence of the swords, he proposed three invasions: the first about 1200; the second about 900, bringing much of the Deverel–Rimbury assemblage; and the third about 300 BC, representing the intrusion of the Brythonic Celts, after iron and elements of the La Tène culture had already arrived as the result of trade.

While the Abercromby–Crawford–Peake invasion hypothesis was evolving, discoveries were made at Hengistbury Head and All Cannings Cross of assemblages of pottery containing furrowed haematite-coated bowls and coarse finger-impressed wares. The Continental Hallstatt analogies were at once evident. Moreover, the association at All Cannings Cross of haematite pottery, finger-impressed wares like Deverel–Rimbury types and bronze implements suggested to some that the All Cannings Cross community represented an intrusive population, which Peake readily ascribed to his second invasion. Maud Cunnington, the excavator of All Cannings Cross, summed up the situation in the following words:

A big movement of people northwards on the continent, whether the incentive was search for better farming land, or mere love of adventure, was bound sooner or later to make itself felt in Britain. This invasion is not likely to have come about as a single incursion but... by a long continued series of small incursions and colonisation.

(1923, 22)

So by 1925 linguistics, implement typology, settlement archaeology and historical parallels were in broad agreement: a complex of Late Bronze to Early Iron Age invasions led to the All Cannings Cross style of culture before the middle of the first millennium; an incursion from the Marne gave rise to the Yorkshire barrow culture in the third century; and the Belgae colonized the south-east of Britain in the first

century.

The discoveries of the next five years were, however, to complicate the issue. Several new hill-forts were being excavated, including Ham Hill, Somerset (1925–7); Chun, Cornwall (published 1927); the Caburn, Sussex (published 1927); Bury Hill, Glos. (published 1929); the Trundle, Sussex (published 1929 and 1931); and St Catharine's Hill, Hants. (excavated 1925–8 and published 1930). New groups of finds from occupation sites at Findon Park, Sussex, and Scarborough, Yorks., were published in 1928, while in the previous year Fox's paper on La Tène I fibulae had appeared. In this atmosphere of rapid new discovery Christopher Hawkes produced three important papers: the first, entitled 'The earliest Iron Age culture of Britain', appeared in the St Catharine's Hill report (Hawkes, Myres and Stevens 1930); the second, 'Hill forts', was published in *Antiquity* for March 1931; while the third, written with Gerald Dunning and called 'The Belgae of Gaul and Britain', appeared in the *Archaeological Journal* in the same year. These three papers totally altered the direction of thought on the Iron Age and paved the way for the next three decades of constructive study. Taking account of all the evidence at the time available, a new scheme was proposed as a logical development of the invasion hypothesis bandied about somewhat loosely in the previous twenty years. Hawkes visualized a massive series of migratory movements among the Celts in central and northern Europe, beginning in the seventh century or before. 'It reached its height in the sixth century, when those groups who crossed over to Britain became our principal Early Iron Age immigrants.' Other Celts in the Late Hallstatt stage of culture who were displaced from France also migrated to Britain.

Thus was completed our widespread agglomeration of Late Hallstatt immigrant groups, predominantly Celtic in blood, but inevitably including other racial elements out of the melting pot of contemporary Europe. Fusing here and there with the Late Bronze Age peoples, they established Iron Age civilisation all over the south and south east of Britain... The main block of their area remained in their undisturbed tenure till the first century BC, and their civilisation, though essentially of Hallstatt character, soon began to absorb influence from the La Tène culture across the Channel. Thus it really requires a name of its own: here we shall be content to call it 'Iron Age A', and the succeeding immigrant cultures 'Iron Age B' and 'C'. The former, in the south west and north east, merely bit into its fringes; it was only the latter, brought by the Belgae, that superseded it in its real home, and in some districts, notably east Sussex, it was never superseded at all till the Roman conquest.

(Hawkes 1931, 64)

Hawkes, then, visualized a complex folk movement impinging in stages on south-east Britain in the sixth century, giving rise to his Iron Age A culture ([Figure 1.5](#)). Life was at times troubled and great hillforts had to be built, 'for as there was no doubt constant tribal bickering, warfare must always have been liable to spring from the background into the foreground of existence' (p. 76). Early in the fourth century a new invasion took place: La Tène peoples from Spain, the Atlantic seaboard and Brittany thrust their way into Cornwall (an idea put forward by E.T. Leeds in 1927, following his excavation at Chun Castle) and spread into Devon, Somerset, Dorset and the Cotswolds, 'absorbing or driving out such Iron Age A people as they found, and superseding their settlements' (Hawkes 1931, 77). These were the Iron Age B people: Spanish La Tène I fibulae, distinctive decorated pottery and historical contacts connected with the tin trade could be quoted in support of this view. In this country the south-western Iron Age B immigrants built great multivallate earthworks and lived in the Somerset lake villages, making highly ornamented pottery. The northern counterpart to the south-western B invasions came in the third century with the incursion of a band of immigrants from Gaul, spreading from Yorkshire to the Cambridge region. These northern Iron Age B peoples eventually linked up with the southwestern invaders by means of the Jurassic Zone, encircling the A people of the south-east.

The third major series of invasions, giving rise to Iron Age C, began in about 75 BC with an influx of Belgic tribesmen from northern Gaul initially into Kent and the Thames valley (Evans 1890), spreading subsequently into Essex, the Fens and the Cherwell valley ([Figure 1.6](#)). Later, soon after Caesar's expedition, a second Belgic invasion – refugees from the Roman advance – took place further west (Bushe-Fox 1925) and spread from the Hampshire harbours into Berkshire and Wiltshire, and probably west Wessex, with subsequent extensions into Dorset and some parts of Somerset.

This précis of the original ABC system has been laid out in some detail because the scheme was to serve as the basis of Iron Age studies in Britain for more than thirty years. The scheme was not revolutionary; it took over the main elements of the earlier historical model with a few additions. Its importance lay in its break from the stranglehold of Continental terminology and in its elegant simplicity. British Iron Age studies had at last come of age.

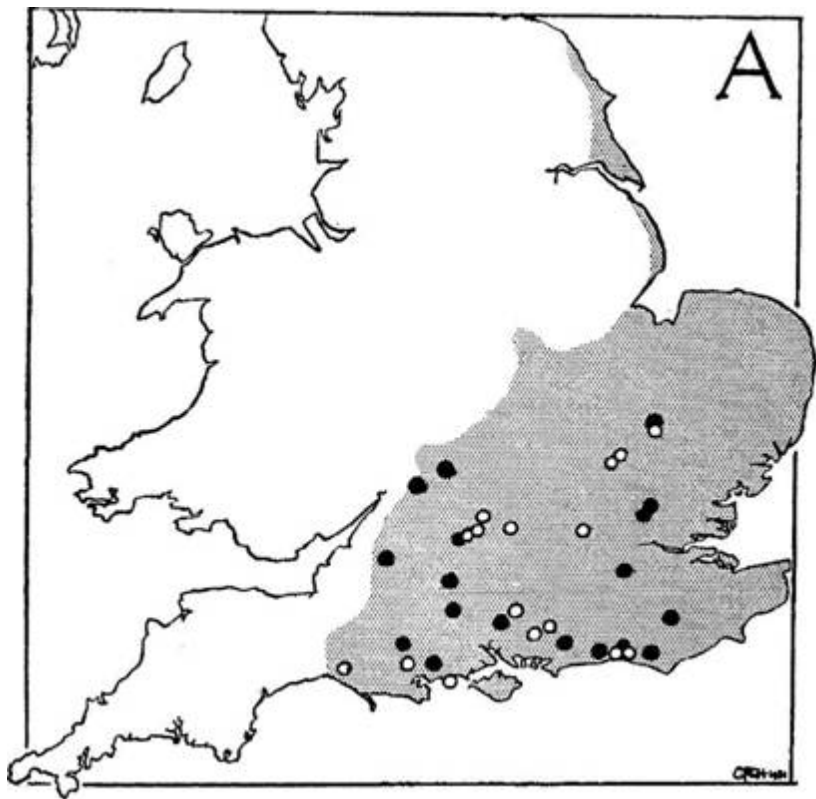


Figure 1.5 *Distribution of Iron Age hillforts, period A (source: reproduced from C.F.C. Hawkes 1931, Figure 1).*

The restatement did not pass unchallenged: in 1932 Maud Cunnington (1932c) threw doubt upon the whole concept of a second Belgic invasion. She considered that the change to bead-rimmed wheel-made pottery did not herald an incursion of new people, but merely a technological advance brought about by the introduction of the potter's wheel. Hawkes replied to her criticisms (Hawkes and Dunning 1932) and the second Belgic invasion stayed.

The theorizing and consolidation of 1930 and 1931 focused the minds of the British archaeological community firmly upon the problems of the Iron Age. Many relationships were hazy and some parts of the country were virtually unstudied. It was natural in such a climate that many excavators should have decided to concentrate their energies upon Iron Age sites. In the next decade the results were impressive. The publication of hillfort excavations came thick and fast. Hawkes writing in 1931 could list only thirty-seven hillforts where the defences had been sectioned; in less than ten years the number had more than doubled.

Not all the activity centred upon defended sites. Meon Hill, Kimmeridge, Twyford Down, Chysauster, Horsted Keynes and Little Woodbury – all open settlements – were excavated; old collections of material from Hunsbury and Spettisbury were published, a number of specific articles were written about metal objects, including the Llyn Fawr hoard and groups of swan's-neck and ring-headed pins from various parts of the country (Dunning 1934), and in 1933 Leeds published his book *Celtic Ornament*, summarizing the main elements of British Iron Age art. Attempts were also made to collate the new material on a regional basis in articles like E.C. Curwen's 'The Iron Age in Sussex' (1939) and R.R. Clarke's 'The Iron Age in Norfolk and Suffolk' (1939). Finally, attention was now being paid to Belgic settlement sites and their relationship to Roman urbanization in the large and important excavations at Camulodunum and Verulamium, both of which began in 1930.

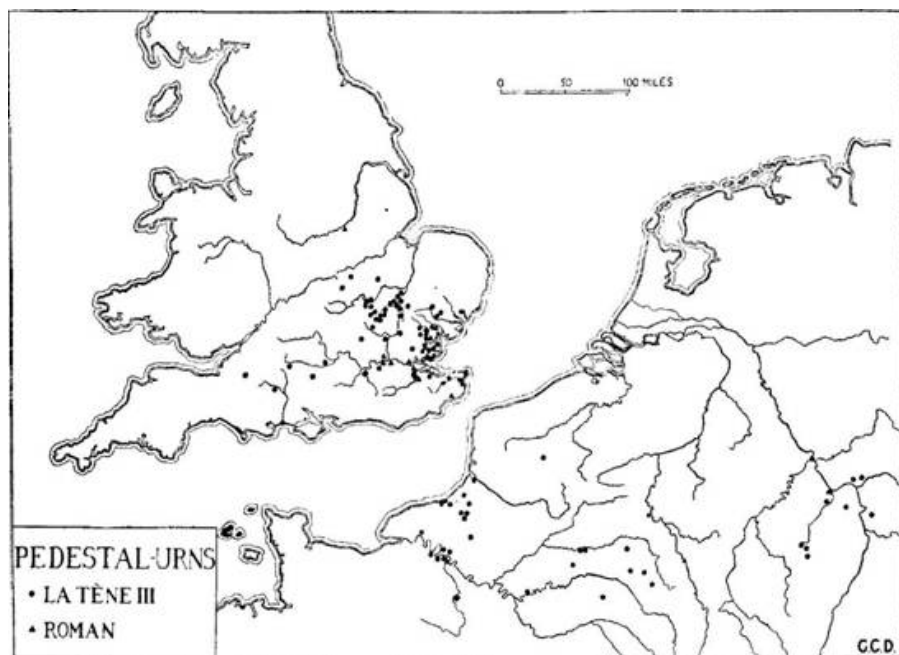


Figure 1.6 Distribution of pedestal urns (source: reproduced from Hawkes and Dunning 1931, Figure 7).

It is hardly surprising that such phenomenal activity and the vast increase in material available for study should demand the modification of the ABC system, put forward when relatively few data were to hand. The large-scale excavations at Maiden Castle (Figure 1.7) forced the issue. In the first interim report (1935) R.E.M. (later

Sir Mortimer) Wheeler proposed a threefold division of Iron Age A: A1 (600–400 BC) was typified by the classic All Cannings Cross haematite-coated assemblage; A2 (400–200) was marked by derivatives of the sharp-shouldered situla types; while AB (200 to early first century AD) showed a hybridization of A2 and B ceramic forms. The next year the date of 200 was modified to 100, with the hint that the incoming cultural elements constituting the B assemblage may have been dislodged from Gaul by the invasions of the Cimbri and Teutones. The new subdivisions were widely accepted in southern Britain although Myres (1937, 26–7), writing of the pottery from Mount Farm, Dorchester, Oxon., found the system difficult to apply in the Oxford region. Curwen, in his *Archaeology of Sussex* (1937, 2nd edition 1954), using the improved nomenclature to describe the finds from the South Downs and the Weald, proposed a further category, called ABC, which ran broadly parallel to La Tène III and showed an overlap in styles between the AB wares and Belgic C elements.

Iron Age B was similarly subdivided, but on a regional rather than a chronological basis. In the third interim report on Maiden Castle, Wheeler referred to ‘that composite culture which, in Britain, has been named Early Iron Age B’ (1937, 274). In the south-west, he suggested, there were in fact three groups: a *Cornish group* extending up the Bristol Channel to the Cotswolds at Bredon Hill, a *Glastonbury group* originating from refugee landings in the Lyme Bay and Exe valley region, and a *Wessex hillfort group* founded by a relatively few newcomers, ‘since their culture... only slowly and incompletely modified the established A2 culture. But they were determined and masterful, and their influence upon the military aspect of Maiden Castle was immediate and drastic’ (*ibid.*, 275). He was referring to the remodelling of the defences in glaciis style. In the definitive publication (Wheeler 1943, 56), it was finally suggested that the immigrants were Venetic refugees ousted by Caesar’s Gaulish campaigns.

The excavations at Bredon Hill, Worcs., in 1935–7 refocused attention on the stamped wares of the south-west. Leeds (1927) had put forward the view that stamped ware was introduced by way of the Atlantic sea-ways, probably from Iberia, while in 1936 Donovan and Dunning had drawn attention to the rather different group of this general type found in the Cotswolds. Petro- logical examination implied contact with Cornwall. (Later work (Peacock 1968), however, disproved the Cornish connections.) At Bredon, Mrs T.C. Hencken was able to define two pottery styles: linear-tooled wares, which she called Iron Age A (more strictly, the parallels were with the AB wares only then being defined in the south), and duck-stamped wares. The former she considered to be the product of the native population, the latter an

importation by immigrants coming from the Breton area c. 100–50 BC by way of the Bristol Channel. It was on the basis of this evidence that Wheeler proposed his ‘Cornish group’.

The complexities of Iron Age B were further developed by the work of J.B. Ward Perkins (1938, 1939) and C.F.C. Hawkes (1939a) in their discussion of material from south-eastern Britain. Describing pottery from Crayford, Ward Perkins drew together a group of similar highly decorated vessels distributed principally in Sussex, Kent and Essex, calling them *South-eastern B* in contrast to the decorated pottery of the Glastonbury group. As to its origins, he concluded: ‘it does seem more probable that... the pottery of the Crayford type represents an intrusive element, than that it was evolved spontaneously from the preceding culture. The source of this intrusive element can hardly as yet be defined’ (1938, 156). A year later C.F.C. Hawkes published his considerations of the Caburn pottery (1939a) and stated firmly his belief that the south-eastern B wares were introduced by intrusive people, who were probably displaced from Armorica by Caesar in the middle of the first century. Following the excavations at Oldbury, Ward Perkins defined another group – the *Wealden culture* – typified by plain vessels with foot- rings, which he concluded was earlier than south-eastern B and had spread to the Weald from Sussex (1938, 152–5; 1944, 146).

At the same time C.F.C. Hawkes’ work on the pottery and finds from various Sussex sites (1939a) and from Worth in Kent (1940b) led him to the view that:

About 250 BC an incursion of Iron Age B Celtic peoples from the continent, after first forcing all the South Downs peoples to defend themselves by building hillforts, was successful in establishing a new domination in the Cissbury region of central Sussex, depopulating the Brighton region and leaving the Caburn I folk as an isolated group of Iron Age A culture in East Sussex.

(1939a, 241)



Figure 1.7 Excavations in progress at Maiden Castle, Dorset 1935 (photograph: Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England)).

The invasion was by ‘Marnians’ from northern Gaul and for the resulting hybrid he adopted Curwen’s term ‘AB’ (after Wheeler 1935). ‘But’, he warns,

the A–B–C terminology is no more than a set of symbols for use while we are feeling our way towards the correct identification of culture-groups defined in factual terms of time and space. Now that such culture-groups are beginning to acquire definition of that order, we ought not to hesitate to

give them regional names to which, according to established archaeological usage, they are thereby entitled.

(Hawkes 1939a, 238–9)

He goes on to suggest that ‘Iron Age AB’ in Sussex includes the Wealden culture in the northwest and the Cissbury culture in the central area.

By 1940, then, the southern British Iron Age was still thought of in terms of the three basic cultural groups suggested ten years earlier; Iron Age A, approximately equivalent to the Continental Hallstatt culture, Iron Age B, running parallel to La Tène I and II, and Iron Age C, reflecting La Tène III. But an unprecedented spate of excavation had so complicated the picture that each of the three broad divisions was now thought to be the result of multiple incursions of invaders, who could be recognized and defined by their pottery types.

In northern Britain the pace of Iron Age research was more leisurely. After the pioneer work of John Williams on vitrified forts (1777), D. Christison’s survey of hillforts (1898) and R. Munro’s publication of his work on crannogs (1882), little advance was made until V. Gordon Childe began a series of hillfort excavations: Earn’s Heugh (Childe and Forde 1932), Castle Law Fort (1933) and Finavon (1935b), followed by Rahoy (Childe and Thorneycroft 1938), where he carried out experiments into the nature of vitrification, and Kaimes hillfort (1941). It was in 1935 that he published his celebrated *Prehistory of Scotland*, in which for the first time he arranged the Scottish Iron Age against the general background of British and European development, defining a native continuum represented by the continued occupation of the hill-top towns and crannogs, upon which two major intrusive elements impinged. In the east he recognized an *Abernethy complex* consisting of the vitrified forts and a scatter of La Tène artefacts, while in the west and north lay the *castle complex* of brochs, duns and wheelhouses with their associations of bone artefacts similar in form to those from south-west Britain. To Childe, then, the more distinctive characteristics of the Scottish Iron Age were introduced from the south of Britain during the latter part of the first millennium.

The next decade in the south saw little change in established views and the publication of comparatively little new material. Regional surveys were being undertaken in Oxfordshire (Bradford 1942b) and the Isle of Purbeck (Calkin 1949), and W.J. Varley (1950b) produced a lengthy consideration of the hillforts of the Welsh Marches, in which he suggested the diffusion of hillfort architecture from a ‘primary area of contour hillforts’ in Hampshire, Wiltshire and Sussex into Dorset, Surrey, the Welsh borderland, north Wales and the Midlands, taking

place some time before 100 BC. About 100 BC or soon after he proposed a second diffusion, this time from the south-west peninsula into the Bristol Channel area and west Wales. Other notable contributions of the period concentrated on non-ceramic material. D.F. Allen published his definitive account of 'The Belgic dynasties of Britain and their coins' in 1944; C.F. Fox described the metalwork of the Llyn Cerrig hoard in a monograph published in 1946; and A.S. Henshall examined the problems of textiles and weaving in an article which appeared in 1950.

Although there was now more diversification of interest, hillforts remained a popular theme and new excavations were undertaken at Blewburton Hill (sporadically), Highdown, High Rocks, Breedon-on-the-Hill and elsewhere. In her publication of the last-named site, Dr K.M. Kenyon appended an analysis of the pottery of the area, defining a *Trent valley* regional group which was culturally Iron Age A but so dissimilar to that from sites further to the south that she suggested an invasion 'at a late date from a backward area of the Low Countries' in the first century BC into the central Midlands, 'an area apparently hitherto unoccupied by Iron Age people. Here they developed a fairly widespread, but crude and unprogressive culture, which may have lasted until the Roman conquest' (1950, 67). In 1952 she extended her study of the earliest Iron Age material in an important article, 'The chronology of Iron Age A', setting out broad ideas on a number of regional 'A' groups and calling for a complete redating. In Sussex she discussed the idea of a Marnian invasion, concluding: 'It is therefore suggested that in the South Downs area, as in Wessex, Iron Age A lasted down, without any supervening AB or Cissbury culture, until the first century BC' (Kenyon 1952, 58). The article was an attempt to bring the existing ABC framework into line with new discoveries but the essentials of the invasion hypotheses remained unchallenged.

The 1950s saw an increased interest in hillfort excavation. Sutton Walls and several neighbouring sites were examined between 1948 and 1951, Hod Hill between 1951 and 1958. Excavations at Blewburton Hill continued to be published in 1947, 1953 and 1959, and Little Solisbury in 1957 and 1962; more limited programmes were undertaken at Blackbury, Devon (published 1955), Torberry, Sussex (1956–8), St Mawgan, Cornwall (1957), Wandlebury, Cambs. (1957), Poston, Herefordshire (1958), etc. Several papers on the regional groupings of hillforts were now published. Dr M.A. Cotton discussed Cornish cliff castles (1959), Gloucestershire hillforts (1961b), Wealden forts (1961a) and Berkshire forts (1962), while Lady A. Fox considered the south-western multiple-enclosure forts (1953 and 1961b). Regional variations in style and function were now being emphasized.

Large-scale examination of settlement sites was becoming more

widespread, no doubt encouraged by the impressive results of G. Bersu's excavation of Little Woodbury (1940). The work at Keston on Dartmoor (1955), Bodrifty, Cornwall (1957), Itford Hill, Sussex (1957) and Staple Howe, Yorks. (1963) led to important advances in our understanding of social structures and economy. There was an increase too in the number of articles on Iron Age metalwork, culminating in a detailed study of art and technology in Sir Cyril Fox's *Pattern and Purpose* (1958).

The reviving interest in the problems of subsistence economy and class structure, which these developments encouraged, was reflected in more studies directed towards understanding the economic basis, an approach which received an added stimulus from the publication of J.G.D. Clark's *Prehistoric Europe: The Economic Basis* (1952). Since before the war, many of the better excavation reports had contained brief summaries of the faunal and floral remains, and sometimes of the mollusca which served as an indication of environmental conditions, but no attempts were made to synthesize or assess the data statistically until H. Helbaek produced a valuable account of the early crops in southern Britain (1953): adequate studies of animal bones were still lacking. The nature of arable farming in the south, however, received attention from E.S. Applebaum in his studies of field systems near Sidbury (1955), from Lady A. Fox, writing of farms and fields on Dartmoor (1955), and from H.C. Bowen in several important works including *Ancient Fields* (1961) and 'The Celtic background' (1969).

Tribal organization and political structure were also examined in several articles, beginning with a general survey of the tribes of southern Britain (Radford 1955). D.F. Allen's work on coinage subsequently extended the picture still further with 'The origins of coinage in Britain: a reappraisal' (1961a), 'A study of the Dobunnian coinage' (1961b), an article and maps issued with the Ordnance Survey's *Map of Southern Britain in the Iron Age* (1962), *The Coins of the Coritani* (1963), 'The chronology of Durotrigian coinage' (1968a), 'The coins of the Icenii' (1970) and 'British potin coins: a review' (1971); together these papers provided an essential historical basis for the first centuries BC and AD.

The post-war period in northern Britain was highly productive for Iron Age studies. In the east of Scotland, extending down to Northumberland and Durham, extensive fieldwork was undertaken leading to the publication of important regional surveys (Jobey 1962a, 1965, 1966a, 1966b, 1971a, 1971c and RCHM(S) *Stirlingshire* 1963, *Roxburghshire* 1956, *Selkirkshire* 1957, *Peeblesshire* 1967), while in parallel a programme of excavation was carried out to examine the range and development of the smaller fortified settlements. Between 1950 and 1975 more than twenty settlements were excavated. As a

result, it was now realized that homesteads and hamlets, defended first by palisades and later by earthworks, were densely distributed over much of the area and that they must have had a considerable ancestry. Paucity of material culture, however, prevented firm dating until the first radiocarbon dates became available (MacKie 1969a), showing that their origins lay in the sixth century or earlier.

The west and north of Scotland, the area of brochs, wheelhouses and duns, was also intensively studied, beginning with two papers by Sir Lindsey Scott (1947, 1948) in which he put forward the view of colonization from the south-west. New evidence from the excavations at Jarlshof (1956) and Clickhimin (1968) led to a more extensive reassessment. In 1964 A. Young published her survey of brochs and duns, and in the following year E. MacKie's important and detailed consideration entitled 'The origin and development of the broch and wheelhouse building cultures of the Scottish Iron Age' appeared (1965c). He rejected the idea of late colonists bringing broch architecture with them, and instead suggested a local development arising from hillfort traditions. The material culture, he felt, was however derived from the south. Regional differences brought out by these two areas of study were formalized by Stuart Piggott (1956) when he proposed four major regions in Scotland: Atlantic, Solway-Clyde, Tyne-Forth and North-eastern.

In southern Britain the advances made to general Iron Age theory in the immediate post-war period were considerable. Some modifications had been made to the ABC classifications like those proposed by Kenyon and noted above (p. 16). Kenyon (1954) had also introduced the term *Bristol Channel B* for both the linear pottery and the duck-stamped wares, which she regarded as co-intrusive into the Severn region, while J.W. Brailsford (1958b) distinguished the Iron Age C *Durotrigian culture* of Dorset from the Iron Age C Belgic cultures further east. In addition to the cultural-historical ABC scheme of description and classification, archaeologists were now developing other broader approaches based on the classic definitions of 'culture' and upon systems of trading, subsistence economy and political organization.

In this atmosphere of change, the Council for British Archaeology held a conference entitled 'The Problems of the Iron Age in Southern Britain' in December 1958, which was subsequently published in 1961 (ed. S.S. Frere). The central paper at the conference, 'The ABC of the British Iron Age', was given by Hawkes. In this he restated the ABC model in a more advanced form, enlarging upon ideas which he had previously placed in outline form before the International Congress at Madrid in 1954 (Hawkes 1956). Taking note of the increasing desire for regional definition, he divided Britain south of the Tyne into five

provinces, subdivided into thirty regions. This formed the horizontal structure of a grid, the vertical element being provided by a fixed series of periods further divided into phases and sub-phases. Within the three-dimensional framework thus formed, the cultural material, still described in ABC terms, could be supported (Figure 1.8). To avoid confusion with the regional and chronological numbering schemes, Hawkes proposed that the cultural letters should be prefixed with an ordinal number; thus 'A1' now became 'First A'. Regional differences could be brought out by adding a geographical prefix such as 'eastern First A' or 'southern First A'. 'The whole array of determinable cultures, lastly, like the hanks of an embroiderer's coloured wools or silks, has to be stitched on to the net of absolute time, which our frame of Periods and Phases holds stretched between its bars' (Hawkes 1959). He followed his summary of the new method of classification with a short historical outline demonstrating the way in which the existing material could neatly be fitted into the classificatory structure.

YEARS B.C. (RADIO)	PERIOD	PHASE	S O U T H E R N P R O V I N C E										FRANCE (RADIO)
			14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	
550	1	1a				EAST- BOURNE							I Hallstatt
500		1b	S HENDY- BURY (A)	O ALL	U HIGH DOWN	T IR	H DEAL	E COL	R CHIST- TOWN	N A			II La Tène
450	2	2a	S MAIDEN CASTLE	O LITTLE	U HINGS	T SOUTH- PARK	H ER	R ERN	N D				I La Tène
400		2b ⁱ	S WOOD	E SOUTHERN	C BOW I, AB	O N		F FIRST	A WIND- WORTH BONDS	CHIN- MOR	B ^o WILL- MOR	A BARBAD	II La Tène
350		2c	S SOUTHERN	O BURL	U COTT	T H		E NATISSE	R THUR				III La Tène
300		2d	S THIRD	O Duro	U B	T SOUTH		E F	R Trio	N Wheat- Catu	D L		III La Tène
250	3	3a	S SOUTHERN	O THIRD	U C	T SOUTH		E F	R Trio	N Wheat- Catu	D L		III La Tène
200		3b	S SOUTHERN	O THIRD	U C	T SOUTH		E F	R Trio	N Wheat- Catu	D L		III La Tène
150		3c ⁱ	S SOUTHERN	O THIRD	U C	T SOUTH		E F	R Trio	N Wheat- Catu	D L		III La Tène
100		3d	S SOUTHERN	O THIRD	U C	T SOUTH		E F	R Trio	N Wheat- Catu	D L		III La Tène
50	4	4a	S SOUTHERN	O THIRD	U C	T SOUTH		E F	R Trio	N Wheat- Catu	D L		III La Tène
15		4b	S SOUTHERN	O THIRD	U C	T SOUTH		E F	R Trio	N Wheat- Catu	D L		III La Tène
10		4c	S SOUTHERN	O THIRD	U C	T SOUTH		E F	R Trio	N Wheat- Catu	D L		III La Tène
5		4d	S SOUTHERN	O THIRD	U C	T SOUTH		E F	R Trio	N Wheat- Catu	D L		III La Tène
0	5	5a	S SOUTHERN	O THIRD	U C	T SOUTH		E F	R Trio	N Wheat- Catu	D L		III La Tène
15		5b	S SOUTHERN	O THIRD	U C	T SOUTH		E F	R Trio	N Wheat- Catu	D L		III La Tène
10		5c	S SOUTHERN	O THIRD	U C	T SOUTH		E F	R Trio	N Wheat- Catu	D L		III La Tène
5		5d	S SOUTHERN	O THIRD	U C	T SOUTH		E F	R Trio	N Wheat- Catu	D L		III La Tène

Figure 1.8 Hawkes' scheme for the southern British Iron Age (source: reproduced from C.F.C. Hawkes 1961, Figure 4).

The newly formulated scheme, first published in *Antiquity* in 1959, was generally adopted: T.C.M. Brewster (1963) used it to describe the Yorkshire material published in his report on Staple Howe; Cotton (1961b) based her consideration of the Cotswold finds and sites firmly on the new scheme, and when in October 1961 a second CBA conference was held on the problems of the Iron Age in northern

Britain, Piggott projected the classification to Scotland (Piggott 1966). The most extended treatment of the Iron Age in terms of the restated ABC was provided by Frere in the introductory chapters of the first edition of *Britannia* (1967).

But in other circles some disquiet was becoming manifest. In 1960 F.R. Hodson offered a number of theoretical criticisms based upon the fear that the rigidity of the framework would obscure the true pattern of Iron Age cultures. ‘Might it not, after all, be both simpler and more objective’, he asked, ‘to define cultural groups in the accepted way, by starting with type-sites and type-fossils... Cultural boundaries could then be defined by the distribution of type-fossils and not by fixed “provinces” or “regions”, and a different pattern for the British Iron Age might emerge’ (1960, 140). Hodson was in fact making a plea, much as Hawkes had done in 1939 (p. 15 above), for the introduction of a classic ‘cultural’ model of the type formalized by Childe. A few years later he provided an outline for testing this approach (1964), in which he proposed an indigenous *Woodbury culture* developing in the seventh century out of native traditions divisible only in terms of regional pottery styles (Figure 1.9). Upon this was imposed a possible group of Hallstatt adventurers, the La Tène I and II Arras culture of Yorkshire and the La Tène III Aylesford culture centred upon Kent, Hertfordshire and Essex. Both the Arras culture and the Aylesford culture were at this time receiving detailed study as the subjects of doctoral theses subsequently published as *The La Tène Cultures of Eastern Yorkshire* (Stead 1965) and ‘The Aylesford–Swarling culture: the problem of the Belgae reconsidered’ (Birchall 1965). Later MacKie extended the general concept of broadly defined cultures to Scotland by proposing three substantially indigenous groups: the *Broch culture*, the *Abernethy culture* and the *Hownam culture* (1969a).

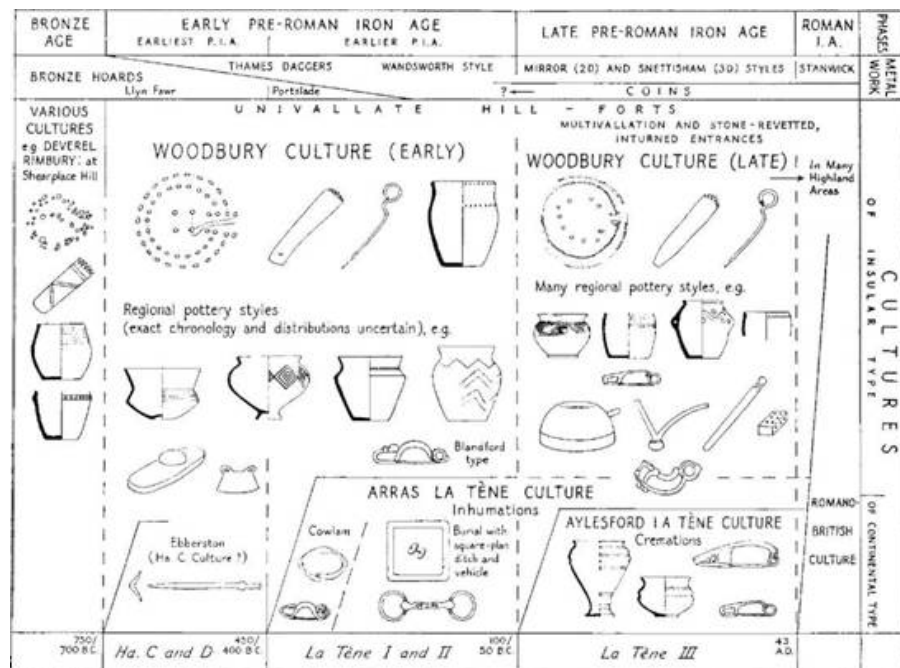


Figure 1.9 Hodson's scheme for the Woodbury Culture (source: reproduced from Hodson 1964, Figure 1).

Chronological divisions were more difficult to define but Hodson recognized three horizons indicated by the presence of imported metalwork, which could be used to distinguish three periods. The first, or *earliest pre-Roman Iron Age* phase, began with the appearance of Hallstatt C types; the second, or *earlier pre-Roman Iron Age*, was marked by the introduction of La Tène I types; the third, or *late pre-Roman Iron Age*, began only after La Tène III contacts were underway. A little later the production of radiocarbon dates offered an independent method of calibration which proved particularly important in placing the early northern British material in perspective (MacKie 1969a).

The cultural model emphasized two things: the indigenous nature of much of the material and the over emphasis which had been placed on changes of pottery styles. Much of the earlier writing reads as though the Iron Age consisted only of animated ceramics endowed with all the qualities of living creatures, with evolutionary properties appropriate to the theories of Lysenko. Hodson showed the weaknesses of such a syndrome by systematically demolishing the basis of the 'Marnian invasion' theory (Hodson 1962), while the later work of D.P.S. Peacock (1968, 1969) demonstrated with some clarity that the differing pottery styles of the south-west and the west

Midlands were as much the result of commercial production centres as of cultural determinates. As a consequence of his work, much of the complex reasoning surrounding Bristol Channel B (or western Second and Third B) can be swept away and many thousands of words of intricate discussion rendered obsolete.

The revolution in Iron Age studies in the 1960s, culminating with Grahame Clark's devastating attack on invasion hypotheses in British prehistory (Clark 1966), left British Iron Age studies bereft of a conceptual framework. It coincided with the introduction into Britain of the 'new archaeology', led by David Clarke's critique *Analytical Archaeology* (1968), offering a processual approach relying heavily on systems theory, popular at the time among social scientists.

Traditional Iron Age studies, which had relied increasingly heavily on historical models, collapsed in this onslaught and much of the nomenclature in common use, couched as it was in invasionist language, became redundant. It seemed to many of us that the time had come to look afresh at the rich and varied database that was fast becoming available, laying it out, so far as was possible, shorn of preconceptions. Only when this was done would it be possible to begin to appreciate the patterns inherent within it. It was in this spirit that the first edition of this book was written in 1971 (published in 1974).

The last thirty years have seen a dramatic change in Iron Age studies in the quantity and quality of the evidence that has flooded into the literature. In the remainder of this chapter a brief review will be offered to introduce the more significant works. In chapter 22 we will return to the rather more difficult questions of what we can make of it all.

Whereas before 1970 large-scale settlement excavations numbered no more than five, in the past three decades the list has dramatically increased and now exceeds a hundred. To list them all here would be tedious. A selection of the more significant are incorporated in the site list (Appendix C, pp. 655–71) and most are referred to throughout this volume. There is now an embarrassment of riches, and in a single book (even of this length) it will be impossible to do justice to the large body of settlement data now available. That said, there is still something of a geographical imbalance with the majority of excavations concentrated in the south-east of the country. The last three decades have, however, seen an upsurge in the excavation and publication of settlements in Scotland, including well-focused programmes of work in the Western and Northern Isles. Wales and the north of England are still rather underrepresented in quantity of sites published, though not in quality of the work done. It is fair to say that after thirty years of large-scale excavations Britain can now boast a far

larger database of well-published Iron Age settlements than any other European country.

Alongside this exponential growth in settlement data there has been a fast-developing interest in the environmental context of sites and the exploration of their economic systems through the detailed assessment of plant and animal remains. This research theme was first developed in the Upper Thames valley, where environmental concerns were written into research designs from the beginning (Robinson 1984). Several wide-ranging reviews of crop regimes (M. Jones 1981, 1984, 1995, 1996; Van der Veen 1992) and of animal husbandry (Grant 1984b; Maltby 1996) have been published. The environmental context has been explored in overviews by J.G. Evans (1975), Jones and Dimbleby (1981) and Simmons and Tooley (1981) while aspects of farming practices have been reviewed by Roger Mercer (1981) and Peter Fowler (1983). The emphasis on environmental data has generated an intense interest in the wetlands. The study was spearheaded by the detailed study of the Somerset Levels led by John Coles, recorded in the fifteen volumes of the *Somerset Levels Papers*. This encouraged English Heritage to support other projects focusing on the Fenlands, the Humber Wetlands and the North-West Wetlands, all of which are now reaching completion. Summary volumes on the Fenlands (Hall and Coles 1994) and the Humber (Van de Noort and Davies 1993) provide useful overviews of the results. Following from this, attention is now focusing on the intertidal zone (Aberg and Lewis 2000; Davidson 2002).

In parallel with these approaches a number of dry-land regional studies have been carried out in an attempt to reconstruct historic landscapes. Among the more useful, from an Iron Age point of view, are the three south-western surveys of Dartmoor (Fleming 1988), Bodmin Moor (Johnson and Rose 1982) and Exmoor (Riley and Wilson-North 2001); the Wessex Chalkland surveys of the Danebury region (Palmer 1984), the Marlborough Downs (Gingell 1992) and Salisbury Plain (Bradley, Entwistle and Raymond 1994; McOmish, Field and Brown 2002); and the Yorkshire Wolds survey (Stoertz 1997).

The study of burial rite has developed rapidly in the last 30 years. Overviews of the existing data (Whimster 1977; Wilson 1981) created a degree of order in the otherwise rather chaotic database while a range of new evidence has been amassed throughout the country. Most notable has been the result of carefully designed research projects in eastern Yorkshire which, together with rescue work, has added enormously to our understanding of the 'Arras' burials (Dent 1978, 1982, 1985; Stead 1976b, 1986, 1991). Elsewhere, in central southern Britain the discovery of body parts and burials in disused

storage pits in Danebury and of two broadly contemporary cemeteries at Suddern Farm, Hants, and Yarnton, Oxon. has allowed the complex *rite de passage* involving excarnation, widely adopted in this region, to be better appreciated. Later Iron Age cremation rites, represented by the élite burials at Folley Lane, Herts., and Staneway, Essex, and at the thoroughly excavated cemetery at Westhampnett, West Sussex, are also adding much that is new to our understanding of the process of burial and to the nature of the Late Iron Age social hierarchy. Meanwhile, isolated burials, both inhumation and cremation, accompanied by mirrors or by weapons (occasionally both) continue to be found over most of southern Britain, showing an adherence to well-defined rites over a surprisingly large geographical area.

The nature of religious beliefs and ritual behaviour has become a popular topic for debate. Evidence for religious structures is gradually accumulating through excavations at Danebury, Hayling Island, Lancing Down, Ivy Chimneys, Uley and Stanstead. Overviews by Wait (1985) and M. Green (1986) provide essential background studies. More specific themes have also been explored. The ritual nature of hoards has been reviewed by Fitzpatrick (1992) and Hunter (1997), propitiatory offerings in storage pits have been considered by Cunliffe (1992, 1995) and by Hill (1995), and the rituals associated with boundaries have been explored by Hingley (1990, 1997) and Cunliffe (1995). Other themes which continue to fascinate are the orientation of houses in relation to cosmology (e.g. Oswald 1997; Parker Pearson 1999; Giles and Parker Pearson 1999) and the ritual significance of midden deposits (McOmish 1996; Parker Pearson *et al.* 2001). Perhaps the most dramatic development in approaches to the Iron Age over the last thirty years has been the increasing willingness of some scholars to speculate about belief and behaviour. Much that is new and interesting has been revealed but there is always a danger that, in building on possibilities, enthusiasm for the novel will run ahead of the supporting evidence.

Returning to more mundane matters, the technical abilities of Iron Age craftsmen have received increasing scrutiny. Tylecote has produced a useful overview of Iron Age metallurgy within a more general framework (Tylecote 1986). Iron-working has enjoyed much attention in a succession of technical papers (Salter 1983, 1987; Salter and Ehrenreich 1984; Ehrenreich 1985; Crew 1991, 1994, 1998; Crew and Salter 1993), while the art of the bronze caster has received thorough consideration in the light of the discovery of foundry waste at Gussage All Saints (Foster 1980) and Weelsby Avenue, Grimsby (Foster 1995). The nature of copper alloys has been subject to a number of studies (Northover 1984, 1987, 1988; Dugworth 1996), while work on glass is beginning to show something of the skill and

proficiency of local craftsmen (Henderson and Warren 1981; Henderson 1985, 1987a and b, 1992).

Questions of trade and exchange have continued to be avidly explored. Two subjects dominate the literature: the export of Cornish tin (Piggott 1978; Maxwell 1972; Mitchell 1983; Cunliffe 1983, 2001b; Hawkes 1984; Penhallurick 1986) and the importation of wine in amphorae (D.F. Williams 1981; Peacock 1984; Galliou 1984; Sealey 1985; Carver 2001). The nature of the trading networks in operation has been considered by Cunliffe (1984d, 1987, 1990b, 2001b) and Cunliffe and de Jersey (1998) for the Atlantic, and by Partridge (1981), Nash (1984), Haselgrove (1984b) and Cunliffe (1988a) for the systems linking northern Gaul to south-eastern Britain. Our understanding of the means of transportation used has been much enlivened by Sean McGrail's discussion of navigation techniques (McGrail 1983) and by the discovery of a well-preserved logboat at Hasholme (Millett and McGrail 1988). A Greco-Roman anchor stock of the first century BC, found off the north Welsh coast, provides evidence of actual trading ships arriving in British waters from the Mediterranean (Boon 1976).

The study of objects of insular British art has continued apace. New items have been discovered, old reassessed, and detailed regional surveys have been published of northern Britain (MacGregor 1976) and of Wales (Savory 1968). Overviews of the British material seen against its Continental background have been presented by Frey (1996), Stead (1985b), and Megaw and Megaw (1986), while the long-awaited and magisterial survey *Early Celtic Art in the British Isles*, published by Martin Jope (2000), is a milestone in the study of British craft skill.

The coinage of Iron Age Britain has continued to receive much attention in the last thirty years, beginning with a number of general reviews and assessments (Rodwell 1976; Kent 1978, 1981; Collis 1975; Cunliffe 1976b, 1981). Thereafter attention has turned to detailed studies of specific issues – the coinages of the Dobunni (Van Arsdell and de Jersey 1994), the Atrebates and Regni (Bean 2000), the Iceni (Chadburn 1992, 1999; Gregory 1992b), the silver coinage of Cunobelin (de Jersey 2001) and potin coinage (Haselgrove 1988, 1993b). Much effort has been expended in maintaining the Celtic Coin Index at the Institute of Archaeology, University of Oxford. Published updatings of Derek Allen's original list (Allen 1961a) were undertaken by Colin Haselgrove (1978, 1983, 1989). Since then, under the direction of Philip de Jersey, the Index has grown dramatically and is now accessible on line (<http://www.arch.ox.ac.uk/coins>). His estimate of the scale of coin finds made annually in Britain (de Jersey 1997) gives some idea of the task of maintaining a thorough record. Two

major works of cataloguing have been published: Richard Hobbs' *British Iron Age Coins in the British Museum* (1996) and Bob Van Arsdell's comprehensive survey of *British Celtic Coins* (1989). Together these two volumes provide the basic reference sources replacing the earlier works by Mack and Allen. Van Arsdell's book incorporates an interpretative framework, but such is the complexity of the data that many alternative interpretations are possible. A broad and carefully balanced survey was offered by Haselgrove (1993d) while Philip de Jersey's book *Celtic Coinage in Britain* (1996) provides a well-illustrated summary of widely accepted views.

From this all-too-brief survey of the colossal body of material published over the last thirty years it will be evident that there has been an exponential growth in the data available for structuring our understanding of the British Iron Age. This has inevitably brought with it the desire to reassess accepted interpretations and to develop new perspectives. A number of general papers contribute to this debate, among them Barrett 1989; Hill 1989, 1993, 1995b, 1996; Collis 1996; and Haselgrove 2001. In addition to these broader statements of opinion many authors of more recent excavation and fieldwork reports and of systematic studies of material culture are seeking new ways of extracting a deeper understanding of Iron Age behaviour and beliefs from the factual evidence available. It is an exciting time to be involved in Iron Age studies: those prepared to devote time to mastering the existing data and discovering new through active field- work and excavation will find much that is new and surprising to be said. If this book has a function it is to provide a conspectus of the riches now available and to offer some ideas on what life in Iron Age Britain may have been like.

Part II

Space and time

2

Space and time

As a preliminary to any archaeological study it is necessary to consider two parameters: the spatial context within which societies under consideration developed and the time span covered. In the context of this book, space is restricted to the islands of Britain, excluding Ireland: the time span begins in the eighth century BC and ends in the first century AD. In the eight chapters to follow (chapters 3–10), various aspects of these themes will be discussed. Here, by way of introduction, we will consider the two parameters in the broadest of terms.

Landscape

Britain is a large island, 1,200 km in length from north to south, stretching from latitudes 50°N to 61°N. Its landforms are varied: in the west the land rises to 1,000 m OD while in the east much of it is below 100 m. These simple facts create a varied biome. Along the entire western seaboard and for some considerable distance inland, rainfall today exceeds 100 mm per year while in the east it is less than 60 mm. In the north-west there are less than 4.5 hours of sunshine a day in July compared with over 6.5 hours along the south coast ([Figure 2.1](#)). Figures of this kind serve to illustrate the stark climatic contrasts between different regions and it hardly needs emphasizing that variations of this magnitude constrain arable regimes. The picture is, however, more complex than this: climate can alter, sometimes quite dramatically, while the extensive exploitation of an environment by man may set in motion a series of irreversible changes.

Much has been written on the question of climatic change in Britain during the first millennium BC (Lamb 1981; Mercer 1981; Turner 1981; Robinson 1984). The consensus view is that there were significant changes during this period, but that given the varied structure of Britain the effects in some regions will have been far more noticeable than in others.

H.H. Lamb (1981) has argued that in the first three centuries of the first millennium BC there was a 2°C fall in overall mean temperature. Conditions improved about 500 BC but there was a return to colder

conditions c. 300. Such a drop could have shortened the growing season by up to five weeks. In the north, with its limited number of hours of sunshine a day during the ripening period, a change of this magnitude could have been disastrous, particularly on the uplands. Crops would no longer have ripened and thus the economic base of the upland communities would have been dislocated. There is, indeed, convincing evidence that upland fields and settlements were abandoned at this time. In contrast, in the south, with many hours of sunshine a day, the shortened growing season would have had much less effect.

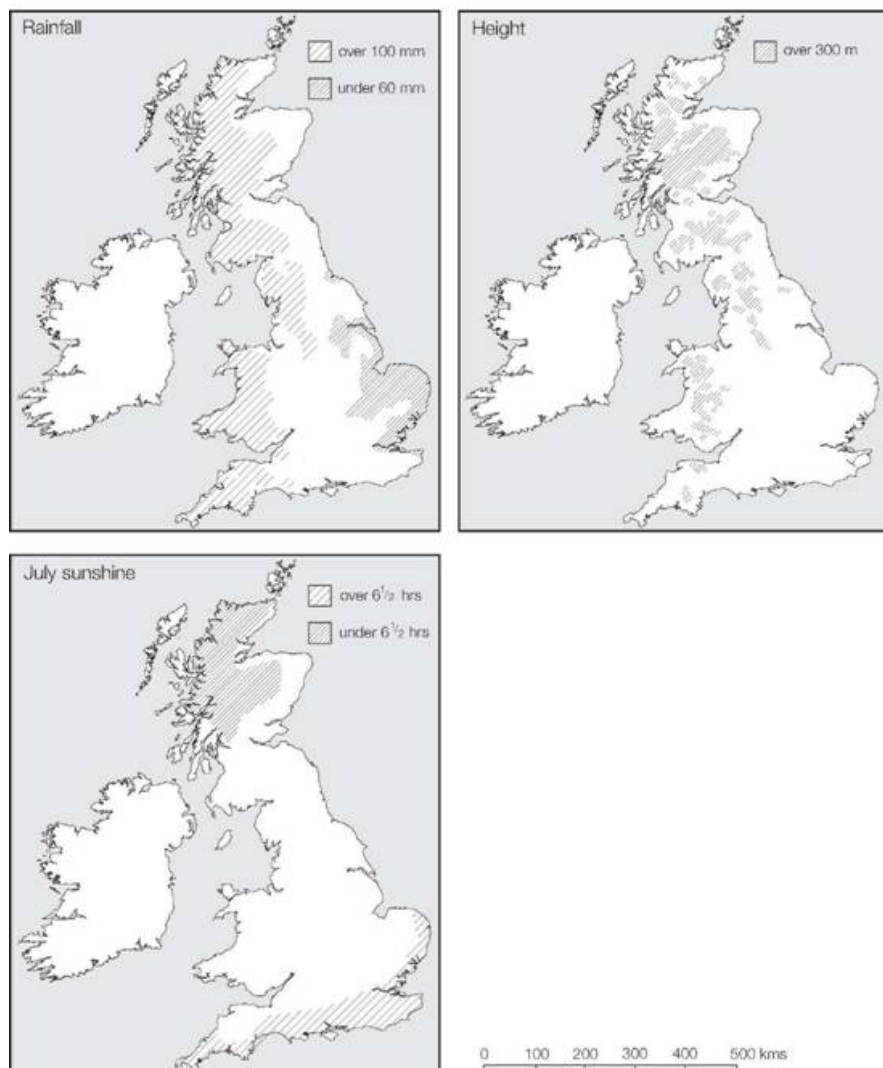


Figure 2.1 *The physical characteristics of the British Isles (sources:*

various).

It is widely accepted that during this period the climate also became noticeably wetter. Deterioration began just before 1300 BC, accelerating after 900 and reaching its wettest about 700. After c. 500 there was a return to somewhat drier conditions. Dramatic evidence for this is seen in a series of peat bog sequences where a rapid rise in peat growth can be detected (Turner 1981, 251–61), and on upland massifs like Dartmoor blanket bog becomes far more extensive (Simmons 1970). The effects of this increase in precipitation will have varied across the country. In the highland region of the west, annual rainfall rose rapidly and was accompanied by vegetational changes of considerable magnitude sufficient to dislocate subsistence strategies and settlement. In the east, on the other hand, in the rain shadow of the highland ranges, increases in rainfall would have been much less and such increases as there were may not have had any significant effect on agriculture.

From what has been said it follows that some parts of Britain, in particular the north and the west, were more susceptible to climatic change than others. Here quite minor fluctuations in rainfall or temperature would have caused widespread environmental change and this in turn would have affected settlement and society. The relationship between humans and landscape in these regions was one of unstable equilibrium, whereas in the south-east the equilibrium was less easily upset. Given these differences it is hardly surprising that social systems developed along diverging lines.

The disruptive effects of human communities on the environment will undoubtedly have provided another dynamic factor. That changes occurred is not in doubt but their magnitude is more difficult to define. On the light soils of the south-east constant cropping since the Neolithic period must have depleted soil nutrients and affected soil structure. Erosion was also a serious reality. Work on the colluvial deposits in the valleys of the South Downs has shown that considerable volumes of soil moved from the hill slopes to the valley bottoms during the later prehistoric period (Bell 1981, 1982). Alluviation in the Midland river valleys also reflects large-scale aerial erosion of arable land at this time (Robinson and Lambrick 1984). While the processes which led to this may have been accentuated by increased rainfall, the primary cause was man's tilling of the land.

Even the formation of peat bogs could have been triggered by human activity where the environmental conditions were nicely balanced (Moore 1975). A twentyfold increase in the growth of peat at Leach Fen, an upland bog in Derbyshire, after 340 BC coincided with large-scale clearance for pasture. The clearance created a wetter

environment which tipped the ecosystem to peat formation. On fragile soils such as the sands of the New Forest and the North York Moors human activity had brought about podsol formation by the middle of the second millennium (Dimbleby and Gill 1955; Dimbleby 1965).

These examples are sufficient to show that human subsistence strategies were having a continual effect on the environment. On fragile soils the effects could be very rapid. Elsewhere they were usually gradual but cumulative. Change could, however, be greatly accelerated where climatic deterioration and human activity interacted to tip the balance.

Social space

Each individual exists in a landscape and requires space. Normally groups of individuals live and work together within a corporate space. By the first millennium BC the typical unit was the family or extended family which was sufficiently sedentary to require permanent settlements. These homesteads will have existed within a zone of exploitation within which the community's basic needs for food and raw materials could be met. Some parts of these zones may have been shared by two or more communities. Pasture land, for example, may well have been held in common and apportioned between a group of farming communities. As population increased the need to create boundaries intensified and in some areas larger social groupings represented by villages and hillforts emerged. By the first century BC even larger settlements with urban characteristics (*oppida*) can be identified in the south-east developing as a response to changing economic pressures.

The structures representing social space – settlements, boundaries, defences – can be recognized archaeologically and the distinctive spatial patterns which they make can be used to define broader groupings. If, for example, one accepts that settlement type reflects socio-economic structure, then zones of like settlement contrasting with other zones allow broad patterns representing aspects of social organization to be defined. The data for the Iron Age are particularly susceptible to this kind of approach.

Other types of pattern recognition may also be used to enhance our understanding of the material evidence. Over much of southern Britain pottery is plentiful and is often elaborately decorated. The definition of style-zones reflects an aspect of social patterning. In some instances it could well be that a decorative range was deliberately chosen by a society as a means of defining its ethnic identity. In such cases, if they can be identified, the distribution pattern will represent the territory of a clan or a tribe. Even greater interest attaches to those

situations where distribution patterns of this kind remain the same throughout successive style changes, implying continuity of boundary over a considerable period of time. There are some examples in southern Britain where territories thus defined in the Middle Iron Age can be recognized again in the Late Iron Age through coin distributions assignable to particular tribes. In such cases it becomes possible to consider the ethnogenesis of tribes.

Time and chronologies

The establishment of a firm chronology is essential to enable data to be ordered and compared and to allow rate of change to be assessed. To provide a suitable framework for a subject as complex as the British Iron Age many methods have to be adopted.

The creation of relative chronologies is comparatively straightforward. There now exist for most parts of the country reliable stratified sequences established by excavation. Where these excavations have been undertaken on a large scale the artefact assemblages recovered are often adequate in size to allow typological changes to be detected within certain artefact classes. These typologies can be greatly enhanced by considering a wider corpus of items, whether stratified or not. Typological sequences of fine metalwork, particularly brooches, are among the most useful for the country as a whole but on a local or regional basis pottery – a plastic medium susceptible to rapid style change – is by far the most valuable. As we will see in chapter 5, quite detailed sequences can be constructed for much of southern Britain.

Typology and stratigraphy enable sequential changes to be defined but they do not provide absolute chronologies. For this other methods are required.

Of limited use is association with datable artefacts. For Britain this is only relevant for the Late Iron Age, when local coinage develops and datable imports from the Mediterranean world begin to appear in any quantity. Even so the date brackets are not always particularly helpful. The dating of Celtic coinage is still a matter of debate though the limits of each of the major types are fixed within certain comparatively narrow limits. Roman imports also take with them wide brackets of dating tolerance. A Dressel 1A wine amphora, for example, could have arrived in the country any time between c. 140 and 40 BC and a few may have come in even later. Nor is there any assurance that an amphora, or amphora sherd, need have been buried or discarded within this time bracket: some may well not have reached their archaeological context until two or three decades after their importation.

Radiocarbon dating offers a rather different method of assessing age. In the early years after the technique was first introduced many archaeologists tended to quote even individual dates, with a high degree of confidence. As the method has been further tested, and its limitations have become better understood, a more cautious attitude has prevailed, some archaeologists going so far as to doubt the usefulness of radiocarbon at all for the Iron Age. They argue that when all the calibrations and statistical deviations have been taken into account the brackets attached to each date are so wide as to be of little value. This may be true of individual dates, but where sequences exist or large numbers of dates are available for a single horizon or type some broad indication of date may be gained. The example of Danebury is informative. More than seventy dates were obtained in accordance with a rigorous programme of sampling. After careful analysis using Bayesian analysis it was possible to arrive at a series of quite tightly dated phases represented by ceramic styles (Buck and Litton 1995; Cunliffe 1995, 13–18). Small numbers of dates, however, cannot usefully be manipulated in this way.

A far more promising method of absolute dating is dendrochronology (dating by counting tree rings). In recent years it has been possible to construct a continuous tree ring sequence back to 5200 BC based on Irish oak (Pilcher, Baillie, Schmidt and Becker 1984). A suitable sample of undated wood from an archaeological deposit can be compared to the master sequence and approximately dated. If sapwood and bark are present then the date of felling of the piece can be ascertained within narrow limits. This has been used to good effect in dating substantial artefacts like the Hasholme log boat (Millett and McGrail 1988), and also in the case of a jetty found at Fiskerton, where dendrochronology has been of considerable value in distinguishing phases of repair (Field 1986). The technique promises to be of very considerable value in dating waterlogged sites but dry sites are unlikely to produce suitable material.

Establishing a chronology is far from a straightforward matter but if all available methods are used, together with a little common sense, and attempts at spurious accuracy are avoided, then it is possible to provide a broad usable chronology for the Iron Age.

A simple system

To contain the complex mass of data from the first millennium BC, so that it may be ordered and compared, it is necessary to create a simple chronological system of the kind offered here ([Figure 2.2](#)).

For the Late Bronze Age, systems are usually based on bronze implement assemblages and the phases are named after hoards. The

typological system most widely used was formalized by Burgess (1979, 1980) and modified by Gerloff (1981) and Needham (1996). A programme of radiocarbon dating (Needham *et al.* 1997) has allowed quite tight dates to be proposed. In terms of the Continental chronology the Iron Age proper is considered to begin with Hallstatt C, that is roughly 750 BC or a little before. Thus there is a period of overlap between the last of the well-developed bronze industries and the early use of iron.

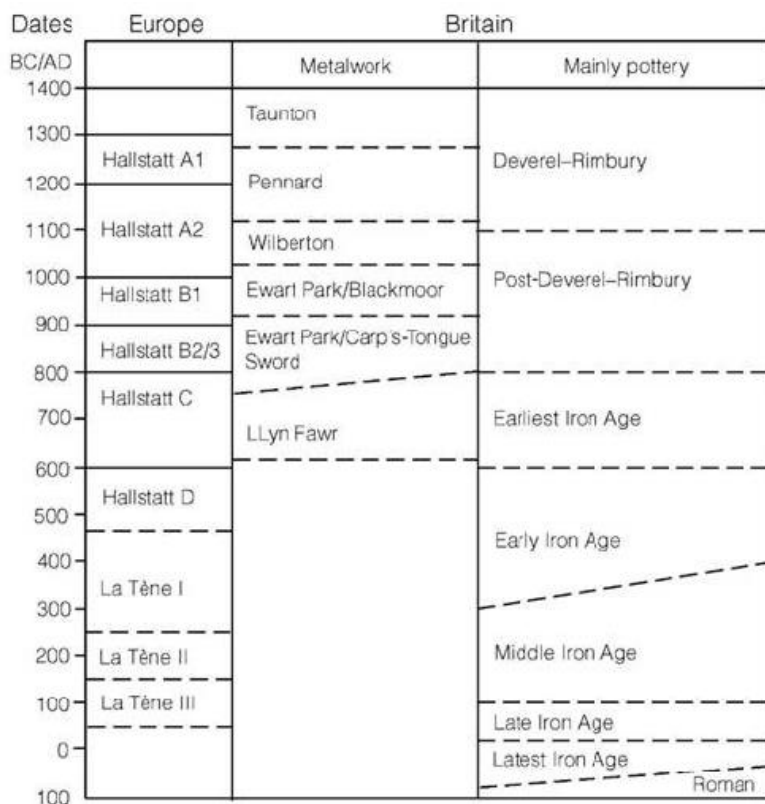


Figure 2.2 Chronological scheme for the British Late Bronze Age and Iron Age.

The scheme offered for the Iron Age in Britain is based on a range of data but relies heavily on the ceramic sequence established in the south of the country. It is, at best, a simplification which has a general usefulness rather than a specific detailed applicability. For much of the north and west of the country even these simple divisions cannot be used and we must revert to best-guess absolute dates based on the radiocarbon assessments that are available. In the text to follow, the chronological terminology used will be a mixture of this simple Early/

Middle/Late scheme with rough absolute dates given where possible.

3

Background

As a prelude to our consideration of the Iron Age communities of Britain, beginning in the eighth century BC, it is necessary to set the scene in this brief introductory chapter if only to establish the trajectories – economic, social and political – evident among the developing indigenous communities.

In Europe the period from the thirteenth century BC until the eighth century is conventionally referred to as the Late Bronze Age. The same term is still used in Britain but it is more usual now to divide the period into five separate phases based on the typology of bronze weapon assemblages named after individual type sites (Figure 2.2). During this Late Bronze Age period the pottery used throughout much of the country was predominantly plain and the forms of the bowls and jars were simple. In the preceding period of the Middle Bronze Age, in the south and east of Britain, the pottery had been more elaborate and often incorporated decorated wares. These assemblages are referred to as Deverel–Rimbury. The change from Middle Bronze Age (Deverel–Rimbury tradition) to Late Bronze Age (Plain ware tradition) some time in the first half of the thirteenth century BC signifies the beginning of a series of changes. Taking a broad perspective it could be argued that the Late Bronze Age in Britain was a period of transition from the *early prehistoric cycle* of the Neolithic to Middle Bronze Age to the *late prehistoric/early historic cycle* which came to an end with the collapse of the Roman political system in the fifth century AD.

Climatic change

The Late Bronze Age spanned a period of climatic change which impacted on the different regions of Britain in different ways.

The first half of the first millennium BC was a period of climatic deterioration, during which the comparatively warm dry conditions of the Sub-Boreal period gave way to a cooler, wetter phase, conventionally known as the Sub-Atlantic period. In sequences constructed from bog profiles, this phase of relatively rapid change can usually be recognized from a study of the pollen content and the

macro plant remains. So clear was this change in many exposures in Europe that it became known as the *Grenzhorizont*, or 'boundary horizon'. In terms of the British pollen sequence it marks the boundary between Zone VIIb and Zone VIII (Pennington 1974, 79–88).

There has been much discussion about the date and duration of the *Grenzhorizont* (summarized in Piggott 1973), but Godwin's work on the prehistoric trackways in the Somerset Levels has clarified the situation (Godwin 1960; Coles 1972). Here, as the raised sphagnum bog of the preceding period began to be flooded with calcareous ground water, presumably caused by increased rainfall, the local communities responded by building trackways of timber and brushwood across the surface of the bog to maintain easy contact between the higher, settled areas. A number of these trackways have now been subjected to radiocarbon dating, providing a consistent range of assessments between 1000 and 500 BC, representing the maximum duration of the Zone VIIb–VIII transition. Confirmatory dates in the eighth century have been obtained from Tregaron in Wales and Flanders Moss in Scotland.

It is difficult at this stage to assess the significance of a relatively rapid period of climatic deterioration on settlement pattern and economy, but it is evident that upland areas in the north and west would have become unsuitable for permanent habitation as areas of blanket bog began to form, while increased rainfall particularly in the west would have rendered certain kinds of cereal growing more hazardous. In the period of climatic optimum, roughly 1250–1000 BC, cultivation of the northern uplands reached 400 m but as conditions deteriorated in the next few centuries, giving rise to a cold and stormy period, the mean temperature fell by nearly 2°C, reducing the growing season by about five weeks (Lamb 1981, 55). For the upland settlements this would have spelt disaster, drastically reducing the maximum altitude at which successful cultivation was feasible to about 250 m. Such a rapid change cannot have failed to have a dislocating effect on society. It is perhaps in causes of this kind that explanations for the apparent retardation of cultural development in parts of the west and north of Britain should be sought. It was in the south and east, where the effects of climatic change were slight, that the major economic, technical and social developments took place.

Settlement in the Thames valley

The Thames valley has long been known for the considerable array of bronze tools and weapons recovered from the region, many of them coming from the river itself as the result of dredging operations. But it is only in the last thirty years or so that the complexity of the Late

Bronze Age settlement pattern has begun to become apparent.

Already, in the Middle Bronze Age, large areas of the valley had been transformed by the imposition of new land divisions, many of them fitting into earlier landscapes dominated by funerary monuments giving the impression that old ancestral markers were being respected and revered while the landscape was being colonized for a more ordered and permanent agro- pastoral use. This development appears to have intensified during the Late Bronze Age with more settlements being established and great areas of land brought under control. A recent survey (Yates 1999) has identified forty-four known farming sites in the valley of the Thames and Kennet upriver from the Colne valley and there can be little doubt that many hundreds more must have existed. Within this broad scatter of farmsteads a few sites stand out by virtue of their enclosing earthworks or island locations as places of greater significance. Yates (*ibid.*) has identified four of these, from the presently available evidence, which, he suggests, may have been focal centres of regional importance, each in some way ‘controlling’ a group of communities living in the neighbouring farmsteads (Figure 3.1). Distributions of metalwork and styles of pottery add some support to the view that these groupings may have been socially distinct polities.

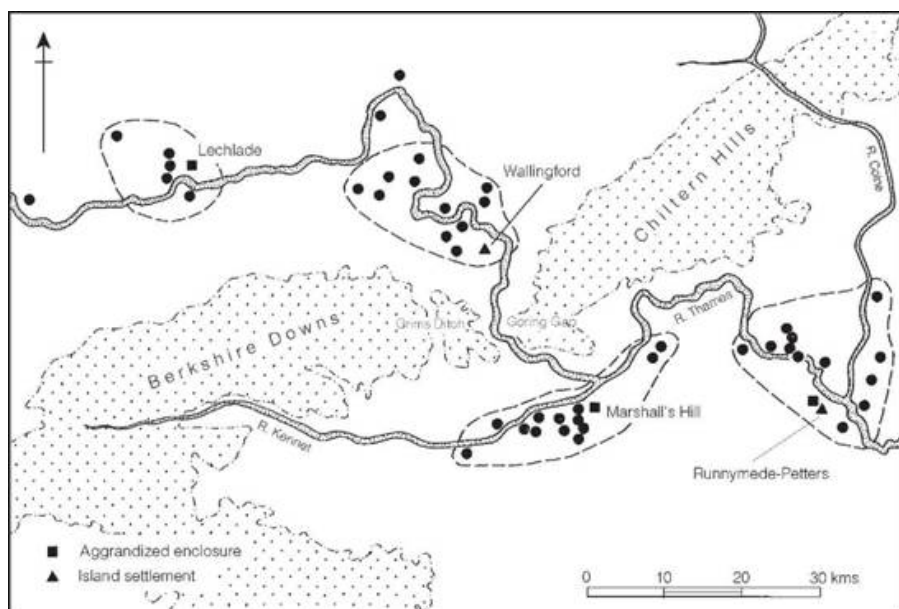


Figure 3.1 Late Bronze Age settlement in the Middle and Upper Thames valley (source: Yates 1999).

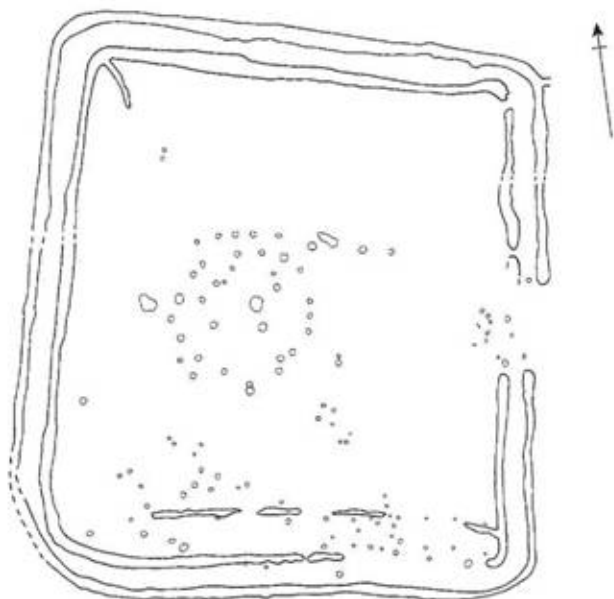
Of the centres of regional importance the best known is the

riverside settlement found at Runnymede Bridge, Egham, close to the confluence of the Thames and the Come Brook. Here the complex piling of the river bank over a distance of more than 35 m implies a considerable expenditure of effort in the interests of providing landing facilities. The associated assemblage is particularly rich, including a range of bronze tools, implements and ornaments of Late Bronze Age type, together with ample evidence of metalworking. In addition there was a variety of bone and antler tools, clay spindle whorls and loom weights and exotic imports including shale armlets and amber beads. The richness of the assemblage may, at least in part, be due to the high status and (or) trading nature of the settlement. Its extent is undefined but traces of contemporary occupation have been found at various points up to 400 m from the river, suggesting a complex of considerable size. The discovery of the Runnymede settlement is a reminder of the importance of the Thames as a route of communication.

Upriver from Runnymede other centres have been identified at Marshall's Hill, Wallingford and Lechlade, while downriver similar riverside settlements may well exist at intervals along its length, as for example at Syon Reach, Brentford where a suggestive range of bronzes and timber piles were recorded early last century.

In addition to these high-status riverside settlements others of a more normal agricultural kind have been excavated on the terraces of the Middle and Upper Thames valley and its tributary the Kennet. At Aldermaston an extensive spread of pits and post-holes was uncovered, representing part of a settlement of unknown extent. Radiocarbon dates of 1690–1390, 1319–1214 and 977–899 Cal BC are rather unhelpful for a site thought to be of short duration but might indicate occupation centring on the twelfth century BC. Eight kilometres away, at Knights Farm, another scatter of pits and post-holes was partly explored. Radiocarbon dates range from 1610–1390 Cal BC, associated with typologically early pottery, to a group of dates for the latest phase which together suggest occupation spanning the period from the fifteenth to the seventh centuries BC.

Lofts Farm, Essex



Windmill Field, Bromfield, Essex

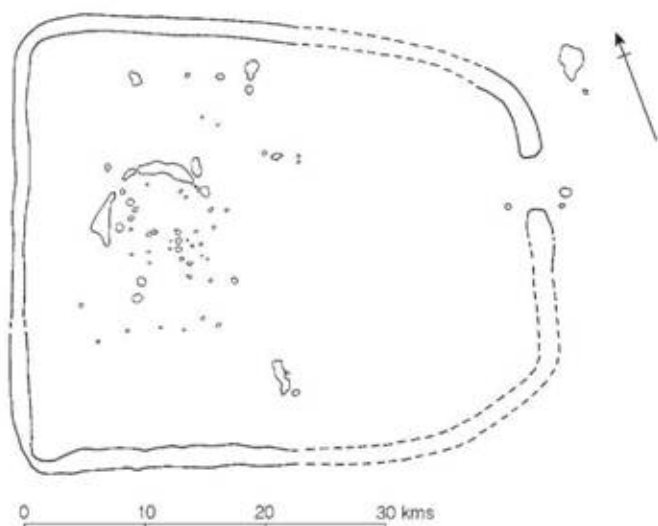


Figure 3.2 Late Bronze Age settlements in Essex, Lofts Farm (source: Brown 1988) and Windmill Field, Bromfield (source: Atkinson 1995).

These two Kennet valley sites are of interest both in providing

useful ceramic assemblages and in offering some hint of the complexities of the economic system. At Aldermaston large quantities of cereal grain were found, presumably reflecting the production of the surrounding land, while at Knights Farm, around which was a high percentage of seasonally waterlogged land, there appears to have been a greater emphasis on livestock. Loom weights, however, were common on both sites. The actual percentages of the cereals recovered from Aldermaston were similar to those from the southern chalkland sites, with the wheat/barley ratio varying from 7.7 per cent/92.3 per cent to 18 per cent/82 per cent depending on context. Of the barley, between 63 and 92 per cent was hulled compared with the naked variety but the absence of processing debris on the site may suggest that the crop was brought in from elsewhere. A different aspect of the economy is presented by the settlement at Reading Business Park. Here textile production appears to have been organized on an extensive scale resulting in rows of flax retting pits.

By the Late Bronze Age most of the Thames valley settlements were surrounded by field systems defined by ditches and presumably hedges, served by extensive systems of trackways and provided with water-holes convenient for livestock. Reviewing the evidence overall, stock rearing seems to have been an important part of the food-producing regime and by the Late Bronze Age it would seem that pastoralism had become the dominant mode of production.

In his review of the settlement evidence from the Middle and Upper Thames valley Yates (1999, 167–8) argues that there was a social and economic dislocation at the end of the Late Bronze Age, with many sites showing signs of abandonment, though settlements in the extreme upper reaches of the river at Shorncote and Lechlade appear to have continued without a break. Evidence from the Lower Thames valley, most convincingly at Hornchurch, presents a similar picture of dislocation and abandonment. We shall return later to the potential significance of these issues.

In Essex recent excavations have begun to define a distinctive settlement type characterized by a single circular house set within a rectangular ditched enclosure. Clear examples of the type are known from Lofts Farm and from Bromfield (Figure 3.2). How widespread such a settlement form was it is impossible yet to say, nor is it clear what the social difference was between these enclosures and the more substantial ring forts to be described below. It is now clear, however, that a considerable variety of settlement type is beginning to appear in the east of Britain.

Settlement in East Anglia

While the evidence from Late Bronze Age settlement in East Anglia is not particularly extensive, detailed work on the edge of the Cambridgeshire Fens at Fengate has produced a comprehensive picture of settlement and land use throughout the Middle and Late Bronze Age. The principal structures to survive are systems of regularly laid out fields and paddocks bounded by ditches and associated with ditched trackways. Within this framework the settlement focus seemed to shift over time. The explanation favoured by Pryor (1975, 336–7; 1992) is that the fields represent the winter pasture for flocks and herds, which would have spent the summers roaming free on the rich grass of the adjacent fen islands. The regularity of the layout of the fields implies a strict order of the kind one would expect if the scarce resources of winter pasture were to have been fairly apportioned between the rival claims of a large and well-established community. In such a system the grain necessary for the community is likely to have been grown on the drier upland areas and exchanged with the fen-edge communities.

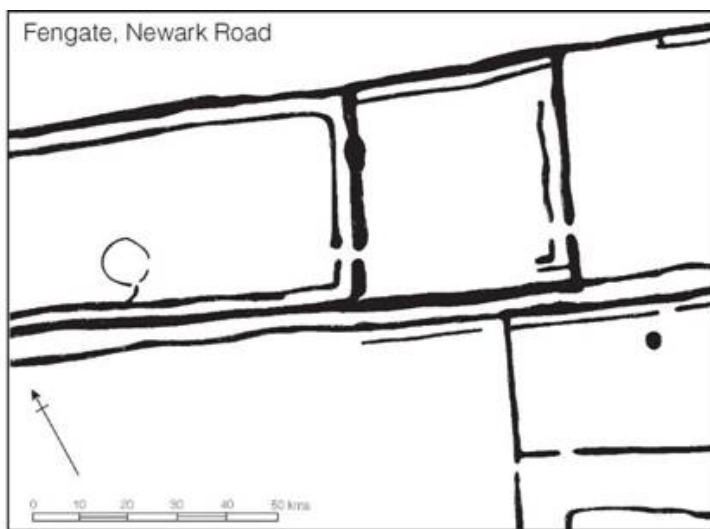


Figure 3.3 Late Bronze Age paddocks at Newark Road, Fengate, Peterborough (source: Pryor 1996).

Within the system of enclosures examined at Fengate, Pryor (1996) has convincingly shown there to have been carefully planned stockyards designed for livestock management which probably served the larger community. Here animals would have been gathered for culling and exchange on fixed occasions during the year when those attending would have engaged in the social intercourse necessary to maintain harmony among dispersed communities. The archaeological

detail is such that the processes of animal handling can be suggested in impressive detail (Figures 3.3 and 3.4). On analogy with modern sheep handling it is estimated that the pens at Newark Road could have accommodated 3,400 sheep while the collecting yard at Storey's Bar Road would have held 2,500 animals. That the complex communal facilities at Fengate are by no means unique is suggested by the discovery of other complexes of fields, pens and droveways at Block Fen and at West Deeping, Lincs. (Pryor 1996, 321).

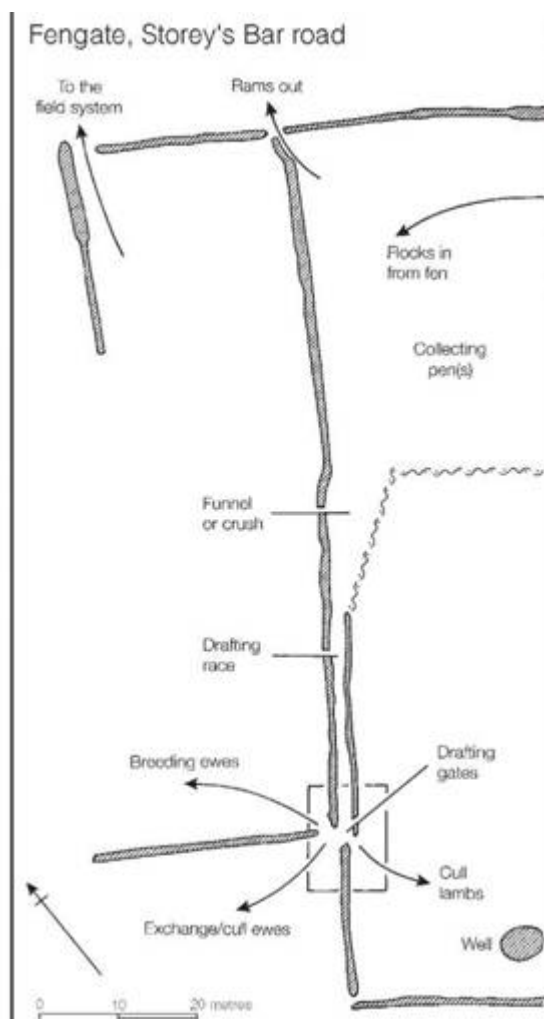


Figure 3.4 Suggested interpretation of the Late Bronze Age ditch system at Storey's Bar Road, Fengate, Peterborough (source: Pryor 1996).

Ring forts in eastern England

Throughout much of eastern England, including the Thames valley, the Middle and Late Bronze Age settlements are largely unenclosed, the circular houses in which people lived being scattered, often over a considerable area, and rebuilt with considerable rapidity usually on or close to the same plot. This is particularly well demonstrated by the excavations at Reading Business Park where, in one part of the settlement, within the 3,500 sq m examined, at least twenty houses were identified.

More rarely, within the east of the country, settlements comprising one or several contemporary houses have been found, surrounded by substantial ring ditches ([Figure 3.5](#)). These ‘ring forts’ as they have come to be known (Needham 1992) vary in size and defensive complexity. Three extensively excavated examples, Mucking (Essex), Springfield Lyons (Essex) and Thwing (Yorks.) serve to demonstrate the range within the general category.

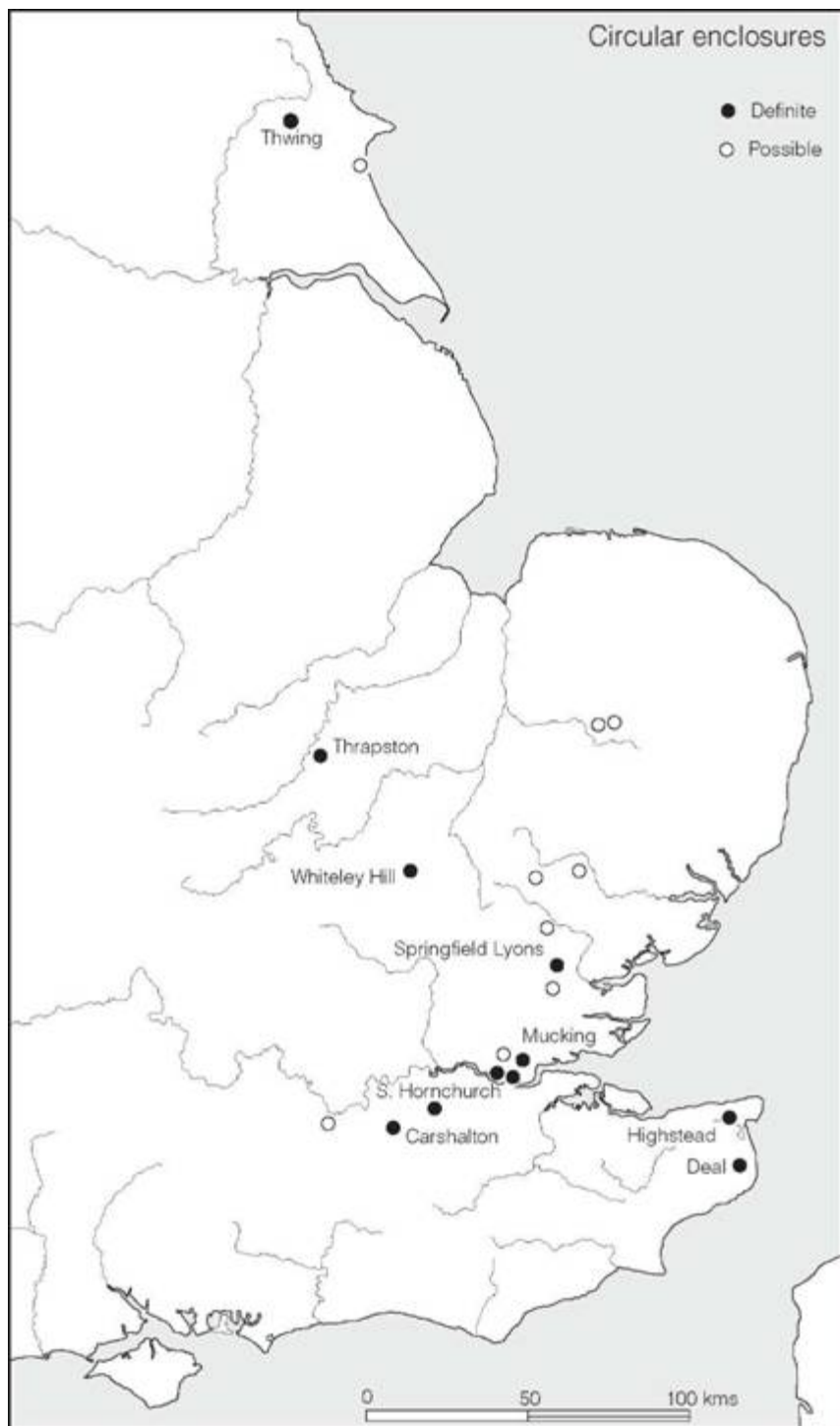


Figure 3.5 *Distribution of circular defended enclosures of the early first millennium BC (sources: various)*

At Mucking ([Figure 3.6](#)) two ditched enclosures of broadly similar date were discovered and largely excavated. They had been superimposed on a second-millennium field system. The South Ring consisted of a double ditched enclosure of circular plan, with opposed entrances, measuring 83 m in diameter overall, with a circular building 13 m in diameter placed in the centre of the inner enclosure. The North Ring was smaller, some 48 m in diameter, and contained three circular post-built houses and a substantial fence shielding them from one of the entrances. The ditch had been recut on one occasion. Radiocarbon dates were obtained from both sites: for the South Ring: 1050–820, 1052–896 and 1051–889 Cal BC; and from the North Ring: 930–760 and 932–799 Cal BC. Since the samples for the North Ring were taken from the recut ditch the initial dates of both sites are likely to have been much the same, somewhere in the tenth to eighth centuries BC.

The enclosure at Thwing, though similar in many respects to Mucking South Ring, was conceived on a grander scale ([Figure 3.6](#)). It comprised two concentric ditches with opposed entrances, the outer ditch enclosing an area of 105 m diameter. Immediately inside the outer ditch was a rampart of chalk rubble fronted by a palisade of timbers set in a continuous bedding trench. The rear face of the bank was given stability by two rows of timber presumably laced together to form a box-like structure. The inner ditch had no rampart. Inside was a circular timber building 25 m in diameter with an inner setting of posts on a 16 m diameter. A radiocarbon date of 1134–1006 Cal BC was obtained for an unweathered occupation layer immediately beneath the rampart.

Springfield Lyons was more complex ([Figure 3.6](#)). The ditch, roughly circular in plan and 54 m in diameter internally, was discontinuous, with the main entrance lying to the east. Immediately inside the ditch was a 6 m gap where the rampart may have stood. This was backed by a double circle of post-holes interpreted as an inner revetment and walkway. Within these enclosing structures the remains of three circular post-built houses were discovered, one of which was centrally placed and faced the entrance. Radiocarbon dates of 1520–1210 and 1020–760 Cal BC for charcoal from the enclosure ditch and 1055–902 Cal BC for charcoal from a post of the central house suggest a possible date range in the tenth or ninth century.

The Mucking, Springfield Lyons and Thwing enclosures were built on a monumental scale. At Thwing the associated assemblage included spindle whorls, loom weights, querns and a range of pottery appropriate to a domestic site, but some objects of status were recovered including beads, pendants and bracelets of jet together with a range of decorated bronze pins, rings and a fragment of a spearhead.

The Mucking Rings also produced normal domestic assemblages, the South Ring yielding in addition a bronze pin and a fragment of a copper ingot, while the North Ring produced a fragment of a socketed axe. The assemblage from Springfield Lyons was more limited but included spindle whorls and loom weights together with debris from bronze casting. The available evidence would suggest therefore that the enclosures were domestic sites but the monumentality of the architecture and exotic artefacts imply an unusually high status.

Something of the contexts of these ring forts is shown by excavation of an extensive Late Bronze Age landscape on a gravel terrace in the Lower Thames valley at Hornchurch (Essex). Here a ring ditch protecting a single circular house was associated with a droveway and a system of ditched fields together with a scatter of houses and areas of intensive occupation. In this example the ring fort, droveway and fields all appear to be broadly contemporary.

Several other sites, less extensively excavated, appear to belong to the same general type. At Mill Hill, near Deal in Kent, a circular enclosure 50 m in diameter was discovered, producing, among other things, a range of bronze and shale items. A similar, but somewhat larger site was located at Queen Mary's Hospital, Carshalton, Surrey: others are also known ([Figure 3.5](#)). The predominantly easterly distribution may be fortuitous, but the circular ditched enclosures are unknown in the well-studied area of Wessex and they may therefore reflect a particular social manifestation restricted to the eastern region in the first two or three centuries of the first millennium.

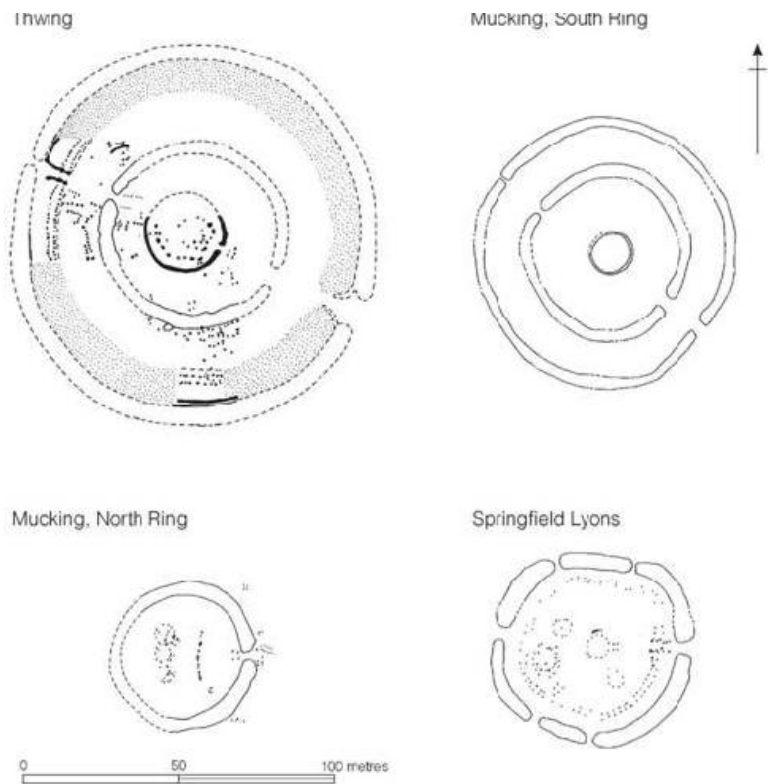


Figure 3.6 Circular defended enclosures of the early first millennium (sources: Thwing, Manby 1980; Mucking, Jones and Bond 1980; Springfield Lyons, Buckley and Hedges 1987).

Settlements on the southern British chalkland

Settlements of the Middle and Late Bronze Age (c. 1500–700 BC) are reasonably well known on the chalklands of southern Britain, where more than forty individual sites have been recorded and at least half of these subjected to excavation of differing thoroughness. One of the characteristics of the chalkland settlements, in contrast to those of the Thames valley and East Anglia, is that from the Middle Bronze Age onwards they were generally enclosed by a fixed boundary. This move to enclosure at the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age is thought to have resulted from changes in kinship and landholding practices (Thomas 1997).

Throughout the entire chalkland zone the basic structural unit appears to have been enclosure, frequently of sub-rectangular form, defined in various ways by combinations of banks, ditches and

palisades. At Shearplace Hill, Dorset (Figure 3.7), the settlement area is enclosed by a U-shaped ditch some 3 m wide, with an internal bank in which may once have been bedded a palisade or perhaps a thorn hedge. At Cock Hill, Sussex, on the other hand, the bank and palisade are external to a 2 m wide ditch. Another variant appears at New Barn Down, Sussex (Figure 3.7), and at Thorny Down, Wilts., where one side only is ditched, the other three being defined by banks, which at New Barn Down supported a close-set palisade. In all these examples, internal settings of posts show that the earthworks enclosed circular huts, usually 6.0–7.5 m in diameter. There were at least two at New Barn Down, two or three at Shearplace Hill, five or more at Cock Hill and probably as many as nine at Thorny Down. Not all, of course, need have been in use at one time, since replacement and rebuilding were probably carried out periodically. The plan is clear at Shearplace Hill, however, where two definite houses and a possible third, enclosing a working area, seem to constitute a single contemporary unit, which would have been ideally suited to a social group of family or extended family size. The unenclosed settlement at Chalton, Hants, was of similar size, with one large hut, a smaller hut with a central hearth for cooking and two unroofed working areas. Here a tentative assessment of grain production, based on the capacities of the storage pits, supported the idea of a single family unit and indicated a total arable in the order of 6.5 ha.

While single-enclosure habitations of the types mentioned above are relatively common on the chalklands a few sites present the appearance of nucleation, but here we face the problem of how many of the individual structural elements were strictly contemporary. The possibility remains that the overall pattern was caused by the gradual shift in location of a single enclosure representing a family unit within a defined and limited territory. Three Sussex sites, Plumpton Plain A, Itford Hill and Black Patch exemplify the problem. Plumpton Plain A (Figure 3.8) consists of four sub-rectangular enclosures defined by banks, spread out along a street over a distance of about 213 m. Three of them have been partially excavated and each has proved to contain at least one hut. While the plan could represent a contemporary situation, the agglomeration thus forming a hamlet or small village, it is equally possible that the enclosures were successive.

At Black Patch on the other hand a series of hut terraces were found scattered among contemporary fields over a distance of about a kilometre. One of these (hut platform 4), selected for total excavation, revealed five individual circular houses set in fenced enclosures containing two ponds (Figure 3.7). The plan suggests broad contemporaneity, with an occupation span not exceeding thirty to fifty years. A detailed analysis of the artefacts found on the floors of the

individual buildings led the excavators to believe that hut 1 was used largely for food production and hut 3 for craftwork and storage, while hut 4 combined elements of both. In huts 2 and 4 little evidence of function survived. Taking the evidence of plan and activity together it is tempting to see the community as an interdependent unit, quite possibly an extended family. The question still remains, how did this hut complex relate to the other three within the immediate vicinity? Are we dealing with a single extended family moving every generation or two or several such groups? The resolution of the problem is beyond the present scope of the evidence.

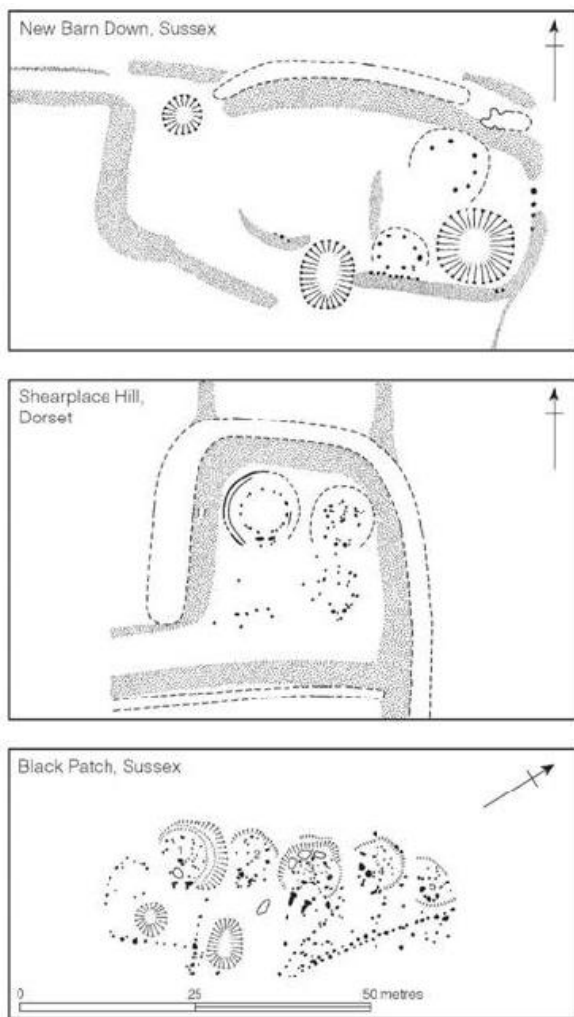


Figure 3.7 Settlements in southern Britain, second to first millennium
(sources: New Barn Down, E.C. Curwen 1934a; Shearplace Hill, Rahtz
and ApSimon 1962; Black Patch, Drewett 1982).

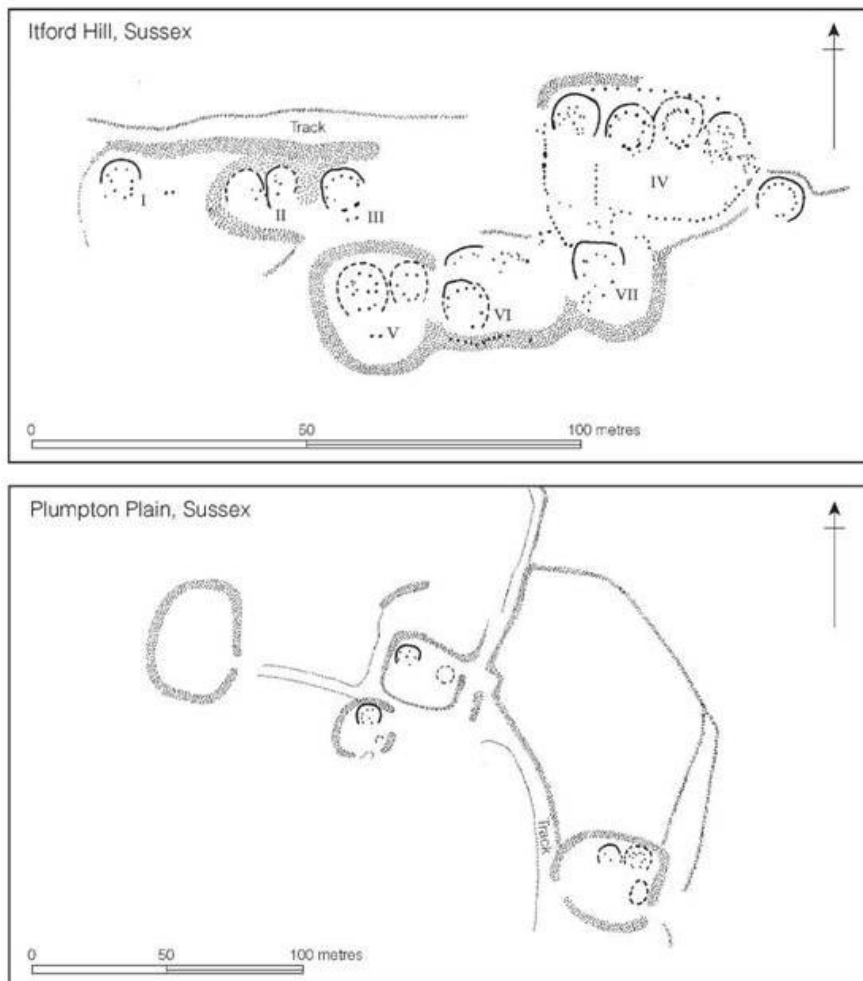


Figure 3.8 Settlements in southern Britain, second to first millennium (sources: Itford Hill, Burstow and Holleyman 1957; Plumpton Plain, Holleyman and Curwen 1935).

The third Sussex example, Itford Hill, superficially presents a dense form of nucleation (Figure 3.8). Here a complex of six enclosures lay adjacent to each other in an elongated area some 128 by 46 m. Extensive excavation, under modern conditions, has allowed much of the plan to be recovered, displaying distinctions in both size of house and function. A reassessment of the published evidence (Ellison 1978, 36) has suggested that the complex is divisible into four distinct structural phases, the first comprising enclosures I, II and III, the second enclosures IV and VIII, the third enclosures V, VI and VII, and the fourth enclosure IX. The successive units were broadly similar in

size and function and comparable to Black Patch hut platform 4 which, we have suggested, probably represented the homestead of an extended family. Additional support for this view comes from the cremation cemetery close to Itford which can be shown, by joining potsherds, to have been closely related to the settlement. The age and sex pattern of those buried here is similar to that which would be expected of a single family unit using the burial ground over several generations. Thus the Itford evidence shows that even on apparently nucleated sites the basic settlement unit need be no larger than the extended family. Nowhere on the chalklands of southern Britain is there convincing evidence of any larger settlement agglomeration.

A second type of enclosure exists in the same general area as the enclosed settlements, and belongs to a broadly similar period. These enclosures ([Figure 3.9](#)), invariably ditched with a bank on the inner side, differ from the settlements in that they yield little evidence of intensive habitation. The two well-known examples, South Lodge Camp and Martin Down Camp, excavated by Pitt Rivers in Cranborne Chase, are both strongly rectilinear in form; South Lodge Camp possesses a single entrance while Martin Down has two entrances and an apparently undefended length along the north side which may originally have been closed with hurdles or some temporary structure leaving no archaeological trace. Pitt Rivers' excavations suggested that the interiors were largely devoid of internal features, apart from a few undated pits, but the re-excavation of South Lodge Camp presents a more complex picture and, incidentally, highlights how much Pitt Rivers missed. It is now clear that the enclosure was constructed within an existing field system. Inside were two circular houses, the larger measuring 8 m in diameter, together with several small pits and isolated post-holes. In view of this new evidence the pits found in the Martin Down enclosure may be seen as the only element Pitt Rivers recognized of a more extensive settlement. Less certainty attaches to the contemporary Wiltshire enclosures on Boscombe Down East, Preshute Down and Ogbourne Down. At Boscombe Down East only limited excavation was undertaken, but sufficient to show that the enclosed 0.1 ha was largely without occupation, although a scatter of pottery was found outside. The ditch clearly related to a linear 'ranch boundary' of the type to be described later (pp. 421–2), which formed its southern side. The northern entrance was provided with a pair of double (recut?) post-holes, presumably defining the position of a gate, a little over 1 m wide, set back to be on line with the inner bank. This suggests that the bank may have formed a bedding for a continuous palisade, the holes for which did not penetrate the solid chalk. The same may well have been the case with the South Lodge Camp and Martin Down Camp enclosures, but the possibility is not susceptible of

proof. The enclosures on Preshute Down and Ogbourne Down in north Wiltshire are even less well known, but they do not differ significantly from those just described.

The exact status of the rectangular ditched enclosures of Wessex is difficult to define with so little reliable evidence available. While they could represent simply a variant of the extended family unit discussed above, the act of deliberate enclosure by labour-intensive ditch digging, the comparatively large house at South Lodge and the number of storage pits at South Lodge and Martin Down and Preshute, may be indicative of settlements of higher status.

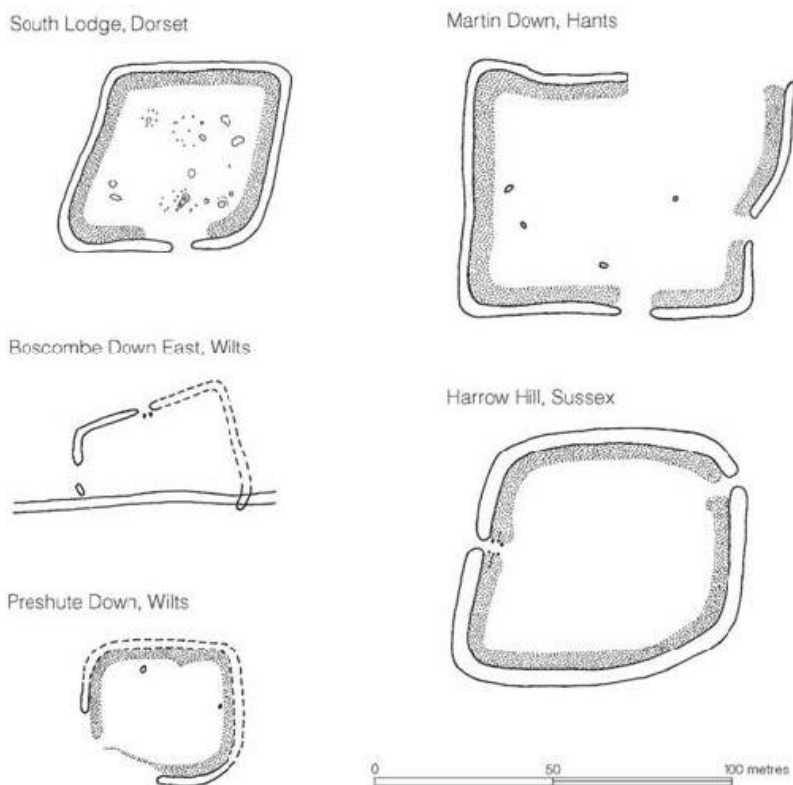


Figure 3.9 Ditched enclosures in southern Britain, second to first millennium (sources: South Lodge, Pitt Rivers 1898, Barrett, Bradley, Bowden and Mead 1983; Martin Down, Pitt Rivers 1898; Boscombe Down East, Stone 1936; Preshute Down, C.M. Piggott 1942; Harrow Hill, Holleyman 1937).

Before considering the economic pattern to which these settlements and enclosures belong, something must be said of their date. Radiocarbon dates are available for Shearplace Hill, 1180 $\pm$ 180 BC;

Chalton 1531–1411; Itford Hill 1182–1128; Black Patch, four dates between 1393–1213 and 1016–888 Cal BC; and South Lodge 1520–1260, 1640–1410 and 1200–970 Cal BC. Although too much reliance should not be placed on such a disparate collection of dates, amassed in a somewhat ad hoc manner, the overall impression given is that the majority of these sites lay within the period 1500–1000 BC and were therefore traditionally Middle Bronze Age passing into the beginning of the Late Bronze Age. This is entirely consistent with the few bronzes which have been found stratified in settlement contexts. The dearth of dates in the ninth and eighth centuries is not particularly significant given so small a sample. At Plumpton Plain an analysis of the surfaces of the whetstones suggested the sharpening of iron tools which, if true, can hardly allow the site to be dated much before the eighth century. Similarly, at Boscombe Down East what was claimed to be iron slag was found in the primary silt of the ditch.

Besides pottery, the surviving material culture of these Middle to Late Bronze Age settlements is sparse. Awls and needles of bone and scrapers of flint point to leather-working on a large scale. Cylindrical loom weights of clay, clay spindle whorls and a single example of a bone weaving comb from Shearplace Hill together with a set of loom weights from Black Patch show that wool was being spun and woven, and numbers of fragmentary querns of saddle type underline the significance of grain production to the economy. Bronze tools and weapons are relatively rare, no doubt because of their value, but awls were found at Black Patch, Chalton, Martin Down and South Lodge Camp; socketed spears occur at Thorny Down, South Lodge and New Barn Down; knives of various kinds are known from Chalton, New Barn Down, Black Patch and Plumpton Plain, where a ferrule and a fragment of winged axe were also found. The early settlement at Chalton produced a palstave. Razors from Black Patch, South Lodge Camp and Martin Down Camp, ribbed bracelets from Thorny Down and South Lodge Camp and a conical bronze mounting from Chalton show that bronze was also used for less utilitarian purposes. While it is fair to suppose that many of the above types could have been current after 1000 BC, the palstave, conical mounting and ribbed bracelets all derive ultimately from the 'ornament horizon' of the thirteenth to twelfth centuries BC and must indicate a second-millennium origin for the sites on which they occur. In contrast, the winged axe and socketed knife from Plumpton Plain and the collection of objects from Highdown Hill, near Worthing, are firmly in the Late Bronze Age tradition of metalwork, dating perhaps to as late as the eighth or seventh century.

The economy of the chalkland settlement

The presence of saddle querns and grain storage pits on many of the settlement sites (both cultural traits can be traced back into the Neolithic period) emphasizes the fact that the basis of the subsistence economy was corn growing. Analysis of carbonized grains and grain impressions on pottery provides a general picture of Late Bronze Age grain production, with barley predominating – amounting to about 80 per cent of the total output compared to emmer wheat. Of the total barley crop some 70 per cent was of the hulled variety – a type suitable for winter sowing. A large quantity of carbonized grain found in one of the pits at Itford Hill proved to be almost entirely of hulled barley of both the nodding bere variety (*Hordeum tetrastichum*) and the erect form (*Hordeum hexastichum*); only five grains of emmer wheat were recorded in the entire sample, but careful analysis allowed the seeds of fourteen different weeds of cultivation to be isolated, including false cleavers, barren brome, black bindweed, opium poppy and many others.

Systematic sampling at Black Patch has produced a detailed picture of crop growing on the downs of eastern Sussex. Of the contexts sampled, hulled barley occurred in 88 per cent, emmer in 47 per cent and spelt in 18 per cent. The total absence of naked barley is surprising. In addition 6 per cent of the contexts also produced beans (*Vicia faba*) which was to become of far greater importance to the later Iron Age economy. These figures for the Middle to Late Bronze Age must be seen against a gradually increasing amount of hulled barley at the expense of naked, and of wheat gaining in importance over both types of barley, as improved farming methods, including a greater reliance on winter-sown crops, gradually came into use towards the beginning of the first millennium (Burgess 1985, 203–4).

Several of the settlements referred to in the foregoing pages are intimately connected with field systems defined by banks – known as lynchets – created largely as the result of ploughing on a slope, a process which allows soil to accumulate at the lower boundaries of the ploughed area. These banks were often increased in height by flints and rubble picked off the fields during cultivation. Since the light and available at the time would only have broken the soil and not turned a furrow, as in the case of a plough provided with a mould-board, it is generally assumed that each field was ploughed in two directions to break the soil sufficiently for sowing. Archaeological traces of cross-ploughing are well attested in Bronze Age contexts in this country and abroad. Such a treatment would result in a patchwork of small, squarish fields, many hundreds of hectares of which are known. It is often very difficult to distinguish between fields of Bronze Age, Iron Age or Roman date, but one of the Ogbourne Down enclosures evidently post-dates the initial use of a group of fields and the same is

true at South Lodge, while at Itford Hill, New Barn Down, Martin Down Camp and Plumpton Plain A, the trackways leading to the settlements are closely related to field systems, which may therefore be contemporary.

In several parts of Wessex there is clear evidence to suggest that large areas of land were laid out in cohesive tracts of fields as part of a single planning operation (Cunliffe 2000, 155–60). Such systems show a strict regularity and are generally referred to as coaxial systems. In many instances these systems can be shown to have been laid out in the Middle Bronze Age. A good example is provided by the complex at Windy Dido (Hants) (Figure 3.10) where some 90 ha of a gentle east-facing slope were divided into fields arranged in five blocks of roughly equal size extending from a linear ditched boundary running along the crest of the hill to an earlier barrow cemetery occupying lower ground to the west. The division of the fields into five units suggests the possibility that each block may have been the preserve of a single lineage. Another large block of coaxial fields at Fiveways/New Buildings, just to the west of Danebury, was laid out from an existing prominent barrow and was immediately adjacent to two rectangular ditched enclosures which fronted on to a road leading from the field system to the valley of the River Test. A third field system occupied the slope immediately to the east of the later hillfort of Woolbury. Here the blocks of fields seem to have been delineated by boundary ditches. All three examples are redolent of careful planning under some coercive authority.

While the preparation of crops must have accounted for much of the communities' efforts, the tending of flocks and herds can have been of no less importance. Each of the excavated occupation sites has produced evidence of oxen, sheep and goats, with lesser numbers of pigs, horses, dogs and deer usually present. Where samples are large enough, and adequate quantitative records have been kept, as at Black Patch, Martin Down Camp and South Lodge Camp, oxen are found to predominate.

The existence of extensive areas of arable fields from the Middle Bronze Age implies that crop growing played an important part in the economy, but the subsistence farming of the region must have involved a close interreliance between arable and pastoral activities, with the animals used to manure the fields while gleaning from the stubble after the harvest. During the growing seasons the flocks and herds would have been turned loose on the open downland or in the woods to forage for themselves.

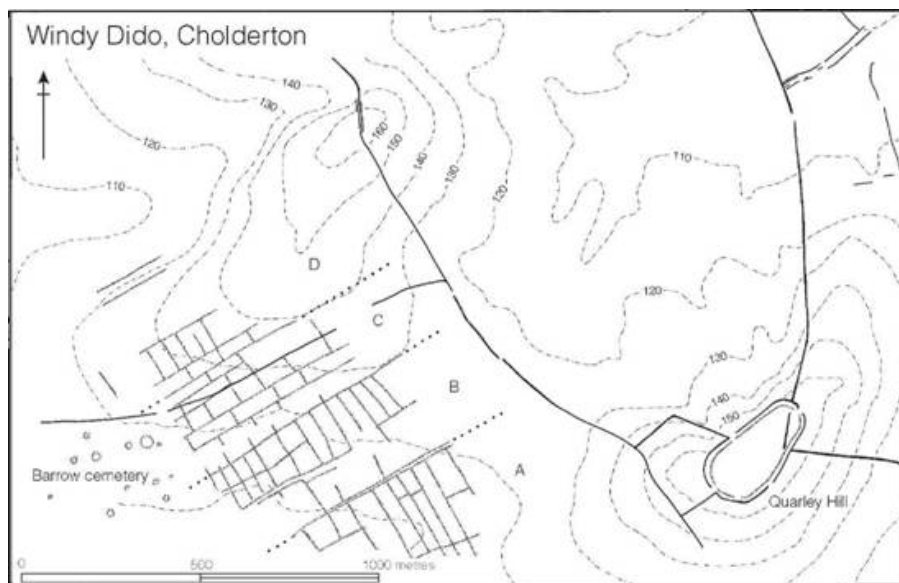


Figure 3.10 *Blocks of coaxial field systems lying between a barrow cemetery and a linear ditch at Windy Dido, Hants (source: Cunliffe and Poole 2000g).*

During the Late Bronze Age there seems to have been a major reorientation of the subsistence economy, with a decline in the importance of crop growing and a rise in the importance of animal husbandry. The evidence for this is the appearance of extensive systems of linear ditches, often running for many kilometres across the countryside, cutting indiscriminately through existing field systems. While these ‘ranch boundaries’, as they are sometimes called, can be shown to put some earlier fields out of operation they do not necessarily imply the wholesale abandonment of agriculture. These fascinating issues will be considered in more detail in a later chapter (p. 421).

Hill-top enclosures in southern Britain

It will be shown in chapter 15 that the construction of hillforts had begun by or soon after 800 BC, but the tradition of building enclosures on hill-tops and of partially enclosing large areas of upland by means of lengths of earthworks can be traced back well into the second millennium. Here we must briefly examine selected sites belonging to these two early categories.

Hill-top enclosures are best exemplified by two sites: Harrow Hill, Sussex, and Ram’s Hill, Berks. At Harrow Hill a sub-rectangular

enclosure was defined by a ditch and a shallow bank into which had been set a close-spaced palisade of timbers, the holes for which had penetrated the natural chalk (Figure 3.9). Of the two entrance gaps evident, one was excavated, exposing an entrance passage flanked by two pairs of timbers 2 m apart. Excavation was limited and finds were few, but pottery evidence would hint at an early first-millennium date. More remarkable was the collection of animal bones which included the remains of between fifty and a hundred cows' skulls with hardly a trace of a limb bone. If this density proved to be even throughout the enclosure it is estimated that more than 1,000 animals would be represented. Interpretation is difficult: it may be that some form of ritual deposit is indicated; alternatively, the enclosure could have been used for slaughtering surplus stock at certain times of the year, the worthless parts of the carcasses, including the heads, being discarded before the rest was carried off. The two explanations are not mutually exclusive. The Harrow Hill enclosure has much in common with the enclosures of Dorset and Wiltshire described above (pp. 46–7), but its more substantial earthworks and prominent hill-top location serve to distinguish it.

The second enclosure, Ram's Hill, is situated in a similar position on the crest of the Berkshire Downs. Although it has been virtually flattened by ploughing, a recent campaign of excavation has brought to light many structural details and has allowed the excavators to propose a three- phase sequence. In the first phase an area of about 1 ha was enclosed by a flat-bottomed ditch 2 m deep, backed by a bank faced with chalk blocks. It appears that, at a later stage, the bank was faced with a palisade of timbers tied back to an inner row of verticals, to create a box- structured rampart. Finally, a little later, a double palisade was erected in front of the rampart, set largely within the filling of the ditch. One principal entrance and a small subsidiary gate were excavated, but two others are apparent on the air photographs. Radiocarbon dating reassessed by Needham and Ambers (1994) suggests that occupation lay within the thirteenth to the tenth centuries BC. Internally a few post-holes were recovered, some possibly belonging to circular huts, others to regular settings of four posts of a kind thought to represent granaries. Finds were sparse, but one notable observation was that the pottery displayed a very wide range of fabrics, suggesting perhaps use by communities coming from far afield. It is possible, therefore, that at some stage Ram's Hill was used for a communal, perhaps socio-religious, purpose.

Ram's Hill, Harrow Hill and two similar enclosures at Highdown Hill, Sussex, and Norton Fitzwarren, Somerset, are sufficiently comparable in size, structure and date to suggest that they may have performed similar economic, social or religious functions in their

respective regions, but more than this it is difficult to state. They do however seem to differ significantly from the 'pastoral enclosures' and the farms described above, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that they may have served a community larger than the extended family group. The distribution of Bronze Age farms on the hill slopes around Harrow Hill gives the impression that the hilltop enclosure was a central point of a territory containing a number of scattered farming communities.

If the hill-top enclosures represent a degree of social cohesion, it is reasonable to ask whether a higher level of selected location can be defined, reflecting perhaps tribal gatherings. One type of site, which can be called the *plateau enclosure*, seems to be relevant here. A number of high hill-top locations can be shown to have been partially enclosed by lengths of bank and ditch thrown across spurs in such a way as to define relatively large flat areas of hill-top. Characteristically the banks are on the outside of the ditches (Cunliffe 1972b, 1976b). A selection of sites of this type are illustrated here (Figure 3.11). Others possibly include the spur dykes on Hamble-don Hill, Dorset, the earthworks on Minchinhampton Common, Glos., and, further afield, the earthwork on Ratlinghope/Stitt Hill, Shropshire. Sites of this type have been very little studied and are virtually undated, but the Hambledon Hill spur dykes, if they belong to this category, have a third-millennium date indicated by radiocarbon assessments. In our present state of ignorance it is safer to recognize the existence of plateau enclosures without attempting to assign a date range or function to them.

The south-west peninsula

Another area to have received detailed study is the south-west peninsula, particularly Dartmoor, Exmoor and Penwith. Of these regions, the settlement history of Dartmoor is the most informative, not least because of the attention which it has received from soil scientists and palaeobiologists, enabling regional ecological variations to be mapped in relation to the contemporary settlement patterns (Figure 3.12) (Simmons 1970). It is now clear that in the Middle to Late Bronze Age the high moorland areas above the 427 m contour were already covered with a blanket bog in excess of 0.6 m in depth. Below this and down to approximately the 243 m contour, the upper limit of the thick forest, lay a densely settled area of open grassland or heath-land interspersed with relict woodland. The open areas originated in the coalescence of clearings which began at the beginning of the third millennium or even a few centuries earlier. Once the forest cover had been removed, continuous grazing and the

leaching effect of heavy rainfall prevented forest regeneration.

Three types of settlement have been defined, each showing some preference for a different ecological zone. The first, the pastoral enclosures, are concentrated on the south side of the moor, usually on south-facing slopes above river valleys close to a water supply (Figure 3.13). These enclosures have substantial walls, inside which lie scattered stone-built huts usually in sufficient numbers for the settlements to be considered as villages. While it is not impossible that small-scale cultivation was carried out within the enclosed area – and indeed at Rider's Rings there are several small, walled garden plots – evidence of agricultural activity on a large scale is lacking. Some of these settlements show signs of growth. At Legis Tor a sequence of walls can be traced, demonstrating that the enclosed area was greatly increased in three successive stages, but whether this was related to a growth in the size of the population is impossible to say.

Only one site in this general category, Shaugh Moor, in the valley of the River Plym, has been extensively examined by modern methods (Figure 3.14). Here a complex of linear boundaries, burial cairns and walled enclosures litter the moor. One of the enclosures, selected for total excavation, was oval in shape, some 75 m across the large axis and was surrounded by a stone-built wall without gates. Within lay five stone-walled huts, with internal timber supports, arranged around the periphery, together with a scatter of post-holes in the central area. The range of radiocarbon dates suggests continuous use throughout the second millennium until the ninth century (Otlet and Walker 1982, 237). Finds were sparse but included quernstones, flint scrapers and a little pottery. The virtual absence of grain (in spite of an extensive programme of sieving) and the comparatively few querns covering the 1,000 years or so of use tends to support the view that the enclosure reflected a pastoral aspect of the economy. One scenario would be to see enclosures of this sort used by a segment of the population who spent the summers on the move tending the livestock, and collecting metal ore as a major ancillary activity. Indeed, it may be that the density of settlement around the western and southern fringes of the Moor is a reflection of the rich alluvial tin resources available in this zone (Price 1985, 1993).

The second type of Dartmoor settlement is the unenclosed village, where clusters of circular huts are linked together by low stone walls, creating multi-angular enclosures which could well have served as both cultivation plots and paddocks for stock at different times of the year. Sometimes these villages reach considerable proportions – sixty-eight huts are recorded at Stanton Down (Figure 3.15) but not all are so strictly nucleated: at Rough Tor on Bodmin Moor, for example, huts and their attached enclosures spread for about 0.8 km along a track,

but here we may well be dealing with a linear development representing settlement shift over a considerable period of time. Unenclosed villages are not particularly numerous; with rare exceptions, they concentrate on the climatically wetter western fringes of Dartmoor, usually within easy reach of streams.

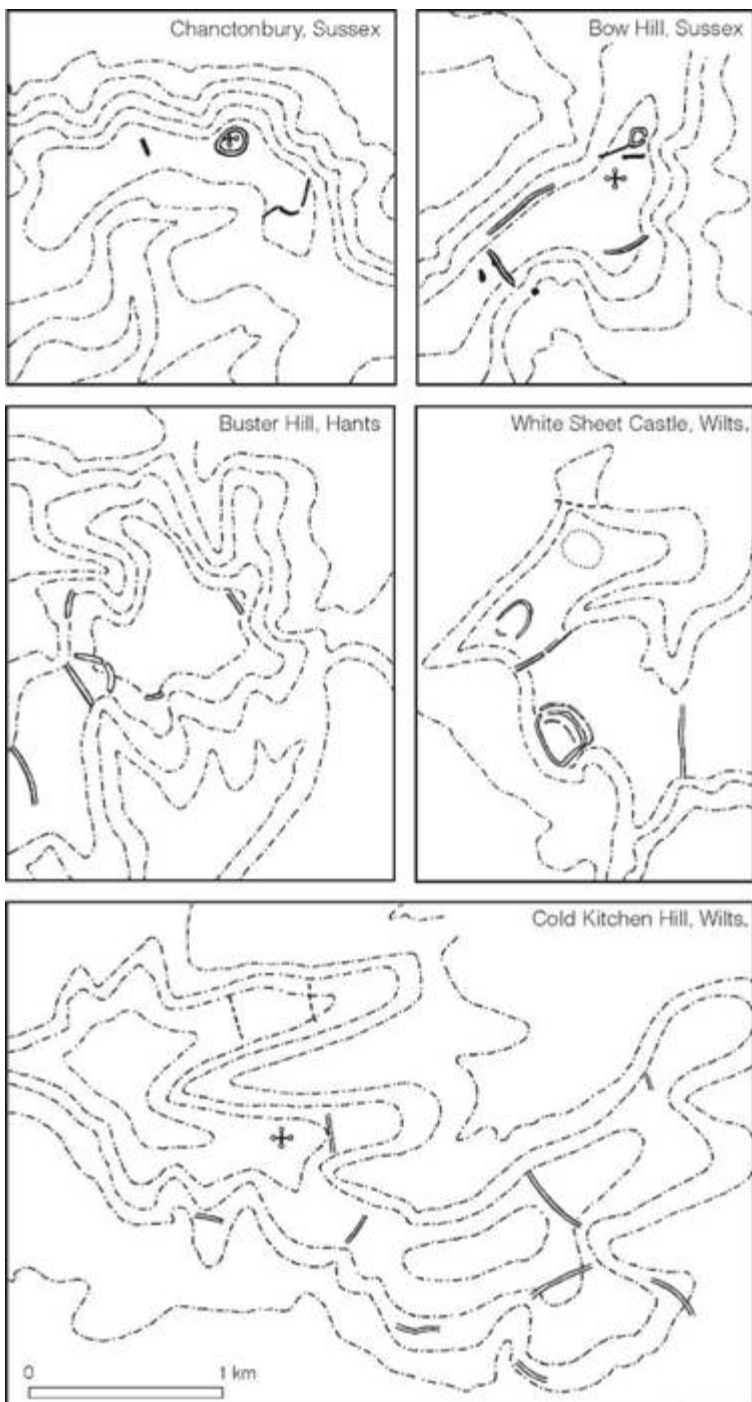
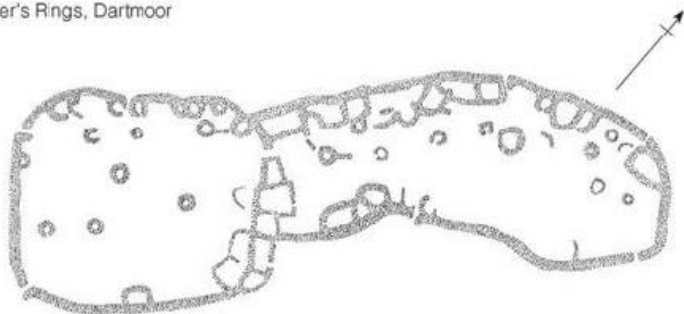


Figure 3.11 Plateau enclosures on the chalk downs. All plans are orientated with north at the top; contours at 100 ft intervals. The cross-symbols represent the positions of Romano-Celtic temples (source: author).

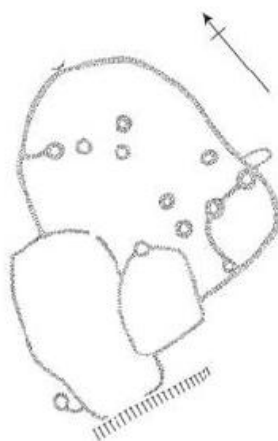


Figure 3.12 *The ecology and settlement pattern on Dartmoor, late second to early first millennium (source: I.G. Simmons 1970).*

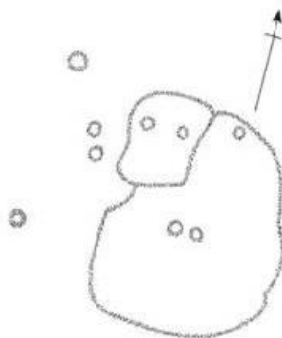
Rider's Rings, Dartmoor



Legis Tor, Dartmoor



Yes Tor Bottom, Dartmoor



0 100 200 metres

Figure 3.13 Nucleated settlements on Dartmoor, late second to early first millennium (sources: Rider's Rings, Worth 1935; Legis Tor, Worth 1943; Yes Tor Bottom, Worth 1943).



Figure 3.14 *Shaugh Moor, Dartmoor, showing the enclosure fully excavated (photograph: Geoffrey Wainwright).*

The third type of settlement is the isolated farm or group of farms found in intimate association with rectangular stone-walled fields (Figure 3.16). Several such settlements are known in their entirety, showing that the arable area is hardly likely to have produced sufficient food for the occupants – only 0.4 ha for the single-hut farm at Rippon Tor and 0.8 ha for the three huts at Blissmoor. The implication must be that additional food supplies were available, presumably in the form of flocks and herds reared on the upland pastures. The arable farms cluster to the east of Dartmoor on the fertile ‘brown soils’, sheltered from extremes of climate by the mass of the moor itself. The dating of these sites presents some difficulties since material finds are sparse. Comparisons of the pottery from the Dartmoor settlements with the better-dated Cornish sequence, however, suggests a Middle Bronze Age date (Read 1970). This gains some support from the discovery of a ‘Bohemian style’ palstave dated approximately to the fourteenth to twelfth century, found in relation to a field system on Horridge Common (Fox and Britton 1970, 225).

It would appear that the large pastoral villages and the small arable farms are different responses to different environments, and it may well be that they represent two divergent subsistence economies, but the possibility remains that this is the archaeological evidence of a transhumant society – the population leaving the scattered farmsteads of the east during the spring and summer, taking their herds and

flocks to the wetter western pastures, to return again in time for harvest. Some form of transhumance is certainly implied by the small hectarage of the eastern group of farms. It has been argued, however, that in addition to an important pastoral component an infield–outfield system of farming was being practised, the small areas of enclosed fields representing only the infields (Denford 1975).

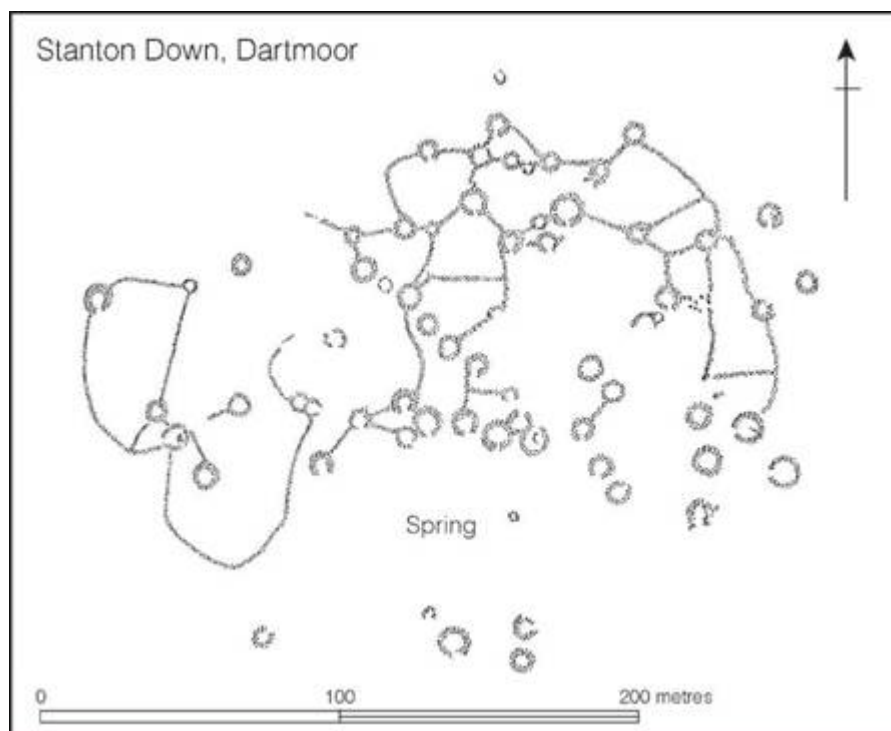


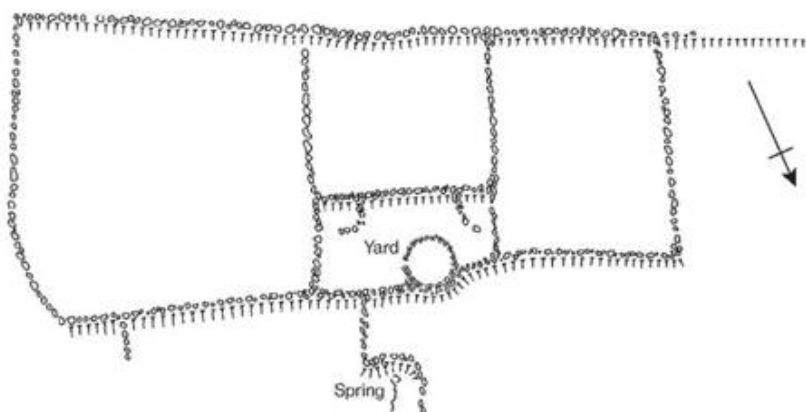
Figure 3.15 A Dartmoor village of the late second to early first millennium (source: Baring-Gould 1902).

Intensive field survey on the south edge of Dartmoor in the Cholvich Town region has shown that large areas of moorland were enclosed at this time by linear banks of stone known as reaves (Figure 3.17) to which enclosed settlements were attached (Fleming 1978, 1984, 1988, 1996). Whether the boundaries divided territories in different ownership or land subject to different usage is unclear, but the extent of the reave system and the associated huts and settlements leave little doubt that the population was large and the available land well organized.

Further west, in Cornwall, structural evidence for Middle to Late Bronze Age settlement is less prolific, although the settlement stratified beneath the Iron Age round at Trevisker is a reminder that

many of the locations chosen for later settlement may well have been occupied on one or more previous occasions. The single radiocarbon date from the site suggests occupation in the thirteenth century BC. The wide distribution of Trevisker style pottery (Parker Pearson 1990, 16–20) implies the existence in Cornwall of an extensive and settled population, utilizing the best farming land. On the more marginal lands, on the fringes of the granite moors, clusters of circular stone-built huts, like those of Dartmoor, are well known, but few have been extensively examined. At Stannon Down, on the western edge of Bodmin Moor, however, a group of eighteen houses apparently associated with corrals and strip fields have been planned and partially excavated. Estimates of population and crop yield suggest that here, as on Dartmoor, an infield–outfield system and a significant pastoral element would have been necessary to supply the needs of the community. In comparison with Dartmoor, Bodmin Moor appears to have been far less intensively occupied (Johnson and Rose 1994).

Rippon Tor, Dartmoor (total acreage of fields 1.06)



Blissmoor, Dartmoor (total acreage of fields 2.17)

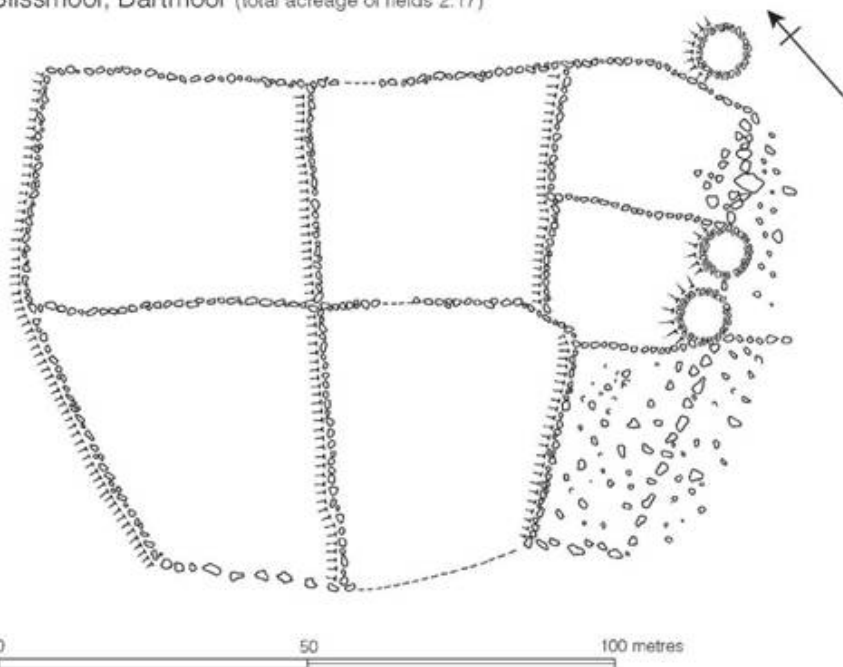


Figure 3.16 Dartmoor farmsteads of the late second to early first millennium (source: A. Fox 1955).

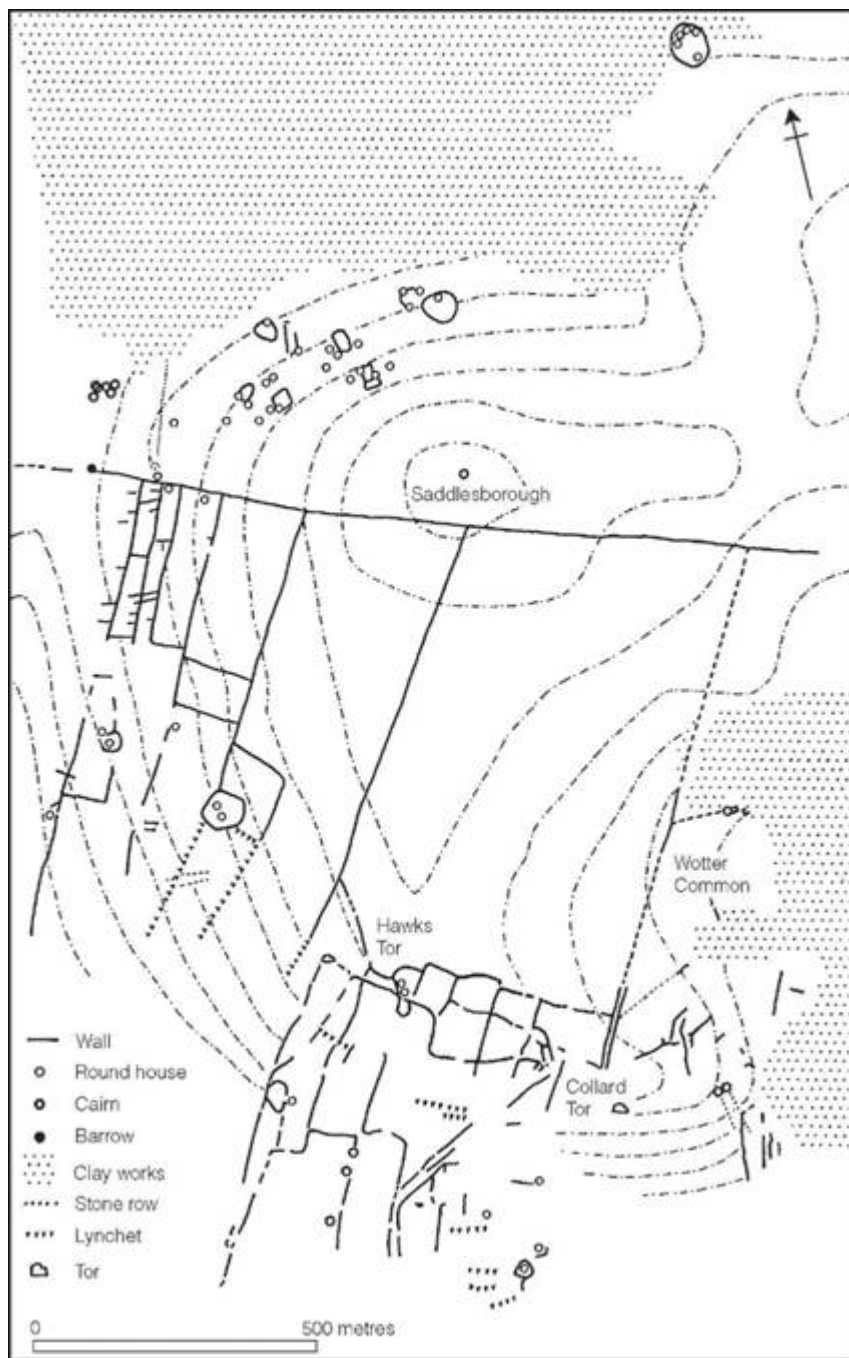


Figure 3.17 Reaves on Dartmoor. The system on Shaugh Moor and Wotter Common (source: Smith, Coppen, Wainwright and Beckett 1981).

The Midlands and Wales

Much of what has been said of the settlement pattern and economy of southern Britain must apply to the rest of the country but at present the evidence is, to say the least, sparse. In Wales several inhabited cave sites of the period have been defined, e.g. Lesser Garth Cave, Radyr, and Culver Hole Cave, Llangenydd (Gower), but open settlements are rarer. The ring-work on Marros Mountain, Pendine, may have been occupied at this time, but the evidence is not conclusive and it may possibly belong to the later first millennium. The above-mentioned sites all produced pottery in the Late Bronze Age tradition but little is known of other aspects of the material culture and economy – except, of course, for the numerous bronze hoards.

The Midlands and north are no better known. Work at Mam Tor, Derbyshire, has however demonstrated the existence of a cluster of Bronze Age huts producing radiocarbon dates of 1530–1260 and 1470–1210 Cal BC, sited on the top of a hill later enclosed by the bank and ditch of an Iron Age hillfort. At the neighbouring hillfort of Portfield, Lancs., the discovery of a Late Bronze Age hoard lends some support to the idea that many of the hill-tops later fortified in the Iron Age may have originated as settlements even as early as the late second millennium.

The north and north-west of Britain

In northern Britain it is now clear that many, if not all, of the unenclosed hut sites found in upland areas belong to the later Bronze Age (Jobey 1980). The most extensively excavated are the clusters at Green Knowe, Peeblesshire, and Standrop Rigg, Northumberland (Figure 3.18) for which radiocarbon dates focusing on the last three centuries of the second millennium BC have been obtained. Sites of this kind lie at the upper limit of prehistoric land exploitation and owe their survival to the fact that they have escaped the ravages of later agricultural activities. Other classes of settlement are less well known. Clusters of hut circles in the Yorkshire Dales, e.g. at Grassington, occasional cave deposits as at Covesea (Moray) and Heathery Burn, Co. Durham, the so-called crannogs of eastern Yorkshire and parts of Scotland and the cellular stone houses of Jarlshof (Figures 3.19 and 3.20) and Sumburgh on Shetland, are all part of an extensive and varied settlement pattern about which few details are known. The general impression which these fragments provide is of well-established communities not unlike those of the southeast, which had adapted themselves closely to the far more varied environments of the

west and north. In the absence of positive evidence to the contrary, it would seem likely that the economy was heavily dependent upon pastoralism, cereal-production including the cultivation of barley and emmer wheat playing a lesser but still significant part (Halliday 1993). In this respect it is worth noting that the upland settlement of Green Knowe lay within a landscape that was being cleared of boulders either to improve pasture or to provide scope for cultivation. Views on this matter are, however, liable to modification in the light of ongoing work (Cowie and Shepherd 1997).

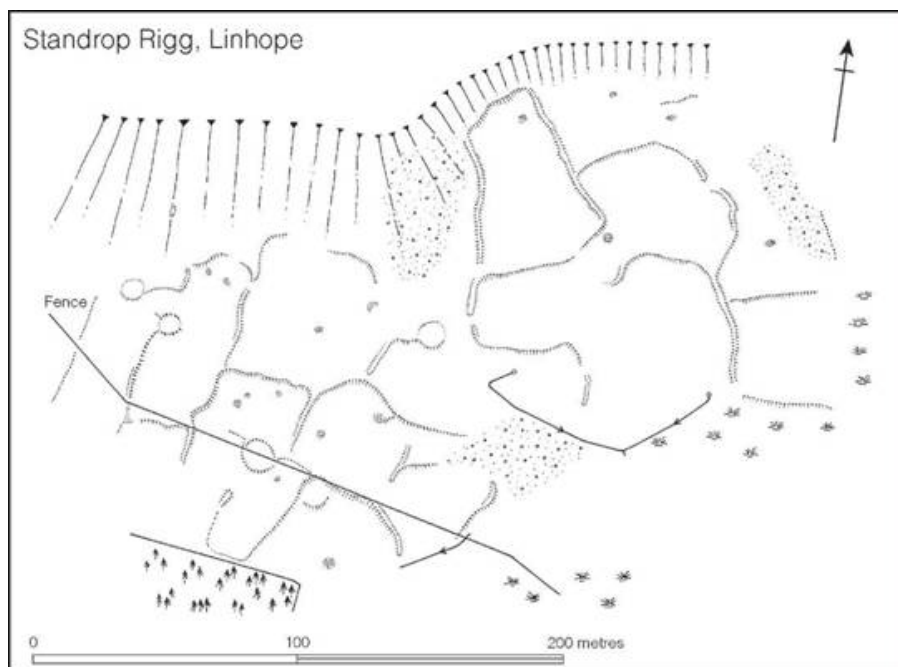


Figure 3.18 *Standrop Rigg, Northumberland. Settlement of the late second to early first millennium (source: Jobey 1983).*

Pottery

The dating of pottery belonging to the period 1500–700 BC is fraught with difficulties, and detailed discussion is not directly relevant to this volume (but see Barrett 1976, 1980). Nevertheless, some generalizations must be made, if only to prepare the way for the more lengthy consideration of the later period in subsequent chapters. The south-east of Britain, south of the Severn–Wash axis, has produced a large amount of pottery of Middle to Late Bronze Age date which used to be classed together under the general title of the

Deverel–Rimbury culture (Preston and Hawkes 1933), a name derived from two Dorset cemeteries excavated in the nineteenth century. Pottery of Deverel–Rimbury type has been recovered from two main contexts: cremation cemeteries and settlement sites of the types already described. In the cemeteries it is seldom found in any form of association with datable metalwork, but at the settlements bronze implements are occasionally found and can be used to provide broad date-brackets for the pottery.

An assessment of the associated bronzes (Smith 1959) has shown that they ran broadly contemporary with the Montelius III phase of the north European Bronze Age, currently dated to 1300–1100 BC. This dating for an early stage of the Deverel–Rimbury culture gains further support from a typological study of the individual ceramic forms, which suggests internal development from indigenous types independently dated to the middle of the second millennium. Further confirmation is offered by an increasing number of radiocarbon dates. Thus the date- bracket 1400–1000 may reasonably be proposed to contain the ‘classic’ Deverel–Rimbury culture.

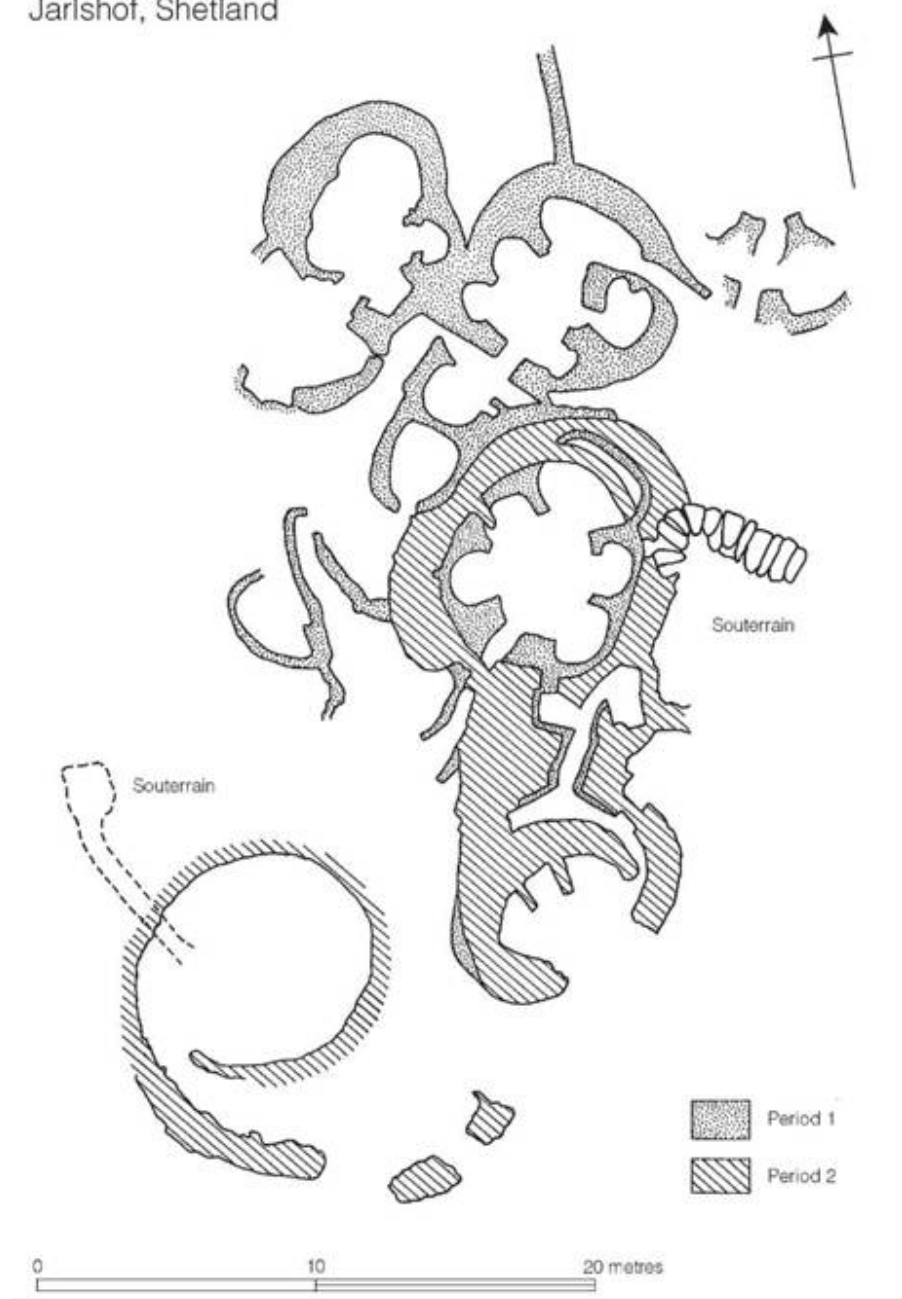


Figure 3.19 Late Bronze Age homestead at Jarlshof, Shetland (source: J.R.C. Hamilton 1956).



Figure 3.20 Jarlshof, Shetland. The houses of the Bronze and Iron Age settlement (Crown Copyright reserved).

Within the ceramic assemblages of this ‘classic’ phase it is possible to recognize a number of regional variations evident in the fine wares which partly reflect the basic folk tradition of the region and partly local inventiveness (Figure 3.21). These differences may be used to define regional groups. Thus in Devon and Cornwall lies the *Trevisker group* (ApSimon and Greenfield 1972; Parker Pearson 1990), in Dorset, south and west of the Stour, is the *South Dorset group*, on the Dorset coast at the confluence of the Stour and Avon is the *Stour valley group* and in Wiltshire and south-east Hampshire is the *Cranborne Chase group* (Calkin 1964; Ellison 1981). The contemporary pottery of Sussex differs significantly enough from the western groups to be considered as a separate *South Downs group*, and in Essex and Suffolk the *Ardleigh group* has been distinguished (Erith and Longworth 1960). Other regional groups can be isolated in the *Thames valley*, the *west Midlands* and the *east Midlands* (Burgess 1974, 214–15).

The characteristic fine wares which enable the regional groups to be defined do not seem to have lasted long after 1000 BC, though in parts of northern Wessex the tradition may have lingered (Gingell 1980; Cunliffe 2000, 149–50). For much of the country the period from c. 1100 to 800 is marked by an intense conservatism in pottery technology, during which time the barrel and bucket types continued

to be made but in a simplified range of forms. This phase may reasonably be called Late Deverel–Rimbury. Eventually, during the eighth century, or perhaps a little earlier in some precocious regions, innovations appeared alongside traditional forms: large angular jars were manufactured probably in imitation of bronze situlae, a range of bowls appeared and a few vessels in peripheral Urnfield style are to be found in the south-east. This phase of innovation has been called Ultimate Deverel–Rimbury (Cunliffe 1978a, 27) or Post Deverel–Rimbury (Barrett 1980). Neither term is entirely satisfactory: here it is proposed to refer to it with the less emotive term *LBA transitional* phase. These ninth- to eighth-century innovations heralded the development of an inventive and dynamic ceramic industry in the south and east of the country which can properly be considered to be Iron Age.

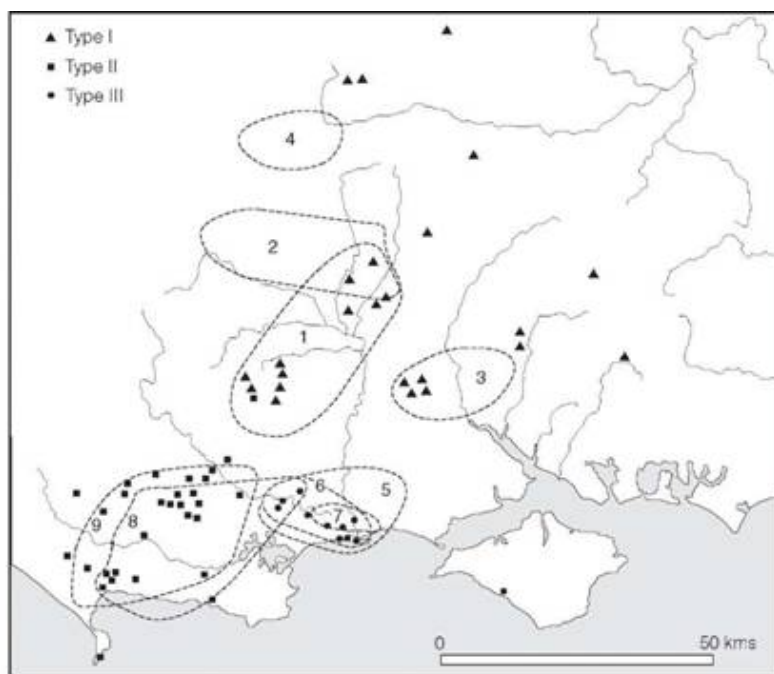


Figure 3.21 *Distribution of Deverel–Rimbury pottery styles (source: Ellison 1981).*

In the Midlands, Wales and much of the north, pottery gradually ceased to be a significant element of material culture and many areas became virtually aceramic. Several urnfields have, however, been recorded in central England, including a large cemetery at Bromfield, Salop, where a series of cremations has been dated from roughly the seventeenth to ninth centuries BC.

In the extreme north of Scotland, in the Hebrides, Orkneys and Shetlands, a well-established ceramic tradition, rooted ultimately in the third millennium but with French Urnfield influences, flourished throughout this period and well into the Iron Age.

The bronze industry

In the foregoing pages emphasis has been placed on the indigenous development of the British Late Bronze Age communities and the relative self-sufficiency of their subsistence economies. Superimposed upon this pattern of intense regionalism is a complicated and wide-flung exchange system best exemplified by the distribution of bronze weapons and implements. Exchange was on two levels: overseas, which brought in exotic types – often copied locally – and local, distributing the products of British smiths over more limited territories. This kind of specialist activity had a long ancestry in Britain; the Late Bronze Age was to see its ultimate development and the beginning of its decline.

The question of chronology has been much debated in the past and has involved complex typological arguments often open to much uncertainty. A recent systematic programme of radiocarbon dating (Needham *et al.* 1997) has led to the development of an independent chronology which is used here. It has shown that previously accepted dates were conservatively late.

The general bronze assemblage of thirteenth- to twelfth-century date contains a wide range of implements, including flange-hilted, leaf-shaped swords based on imported Erbenheim and Hemigkofen weapons; leaf-shaped Ballintober swords; dirks; looped palstaves; experimental types of socketed axe; basal-looped spearheads; razors and ring-socketed sickles. Distribution of these types is wide but centres upon south-eastern England. In the south it is generally known as the *Penard phase*, after a Glamorganshire hoard; in Scotland it is represented in the *Glentool tradition*. Connections were wide, linking England and Scotland to Wales, Ireland and the northern and western areas of France.

From the middle of the twelfth century until the end of the eleventh, Britain south of the Humber was served by bronze smiths casting a range of new implements in bronze with a high lead content, a technical practice which was to last in the south for some centuries. These new types constitute what is known as the *Wilburton complex*: they include leaf-shaped swords with splayed V-shaped shoulders, long tongue-shaped chapes, simple-socketed spearheads pegged into position on the shaft, late types of palstaves and socketed axes. Again trading connections were maintained between southern Britain and

north-west France, but the new types do not appear to have penetrated far into northern England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. In these regions, traditions and technology harking back to the preceding phases remained dominant. In northern Britain, for example, where the broadly contemporary assemblage is known as the *Wallington complex*, some of the implements such as the side-looped spearhead and low-flanged palstave are close to types developed before the eleventh century. In Wales, too, early types continued in use to the ninth century, although late hoards in the Wilburton tradition are found in the Upper Severn valley. A similarly retarded industry, called the *Poldar phase* (Coles 1962b), has been defined for Scotland, where a number of Wilburton and Wallington types have turned up, but only in small quantities. Most of the elements of ninth- to eighth-century metallurgy belonging to the Wilburton complex are represented in a remarkable founder's hoard discovered in 1959 at Isleham, Cambs., where some 6,500 fragments of bronze were found buried in a small pit cut into the chalk. In addition to weapons of Wilburton Complex type, the hoard contained fragments of bronze cauldrons and a series of harness fittings which included cheek-pieces, annular strap-crossings and cruciform strap-crossings. Thus this single hoard exemplifies most aspects of the developed bronze technology and trading systems of the period, while the presence of the bronze harness trappings and the cauldron fragments reflects new elements, which we shall find recurring more frequently in hoards of the later eighth, seventh and sixth centuries.

In south-eastern Britain the tenth century is a period of rapid typological change. At present it is not well defined but is typified by the hoard found at Blackmoor after which the phase has been named.

At the end of the tenth century south and east Britain developed a series of new types in parallel with the western areas of France, with which close contacts were maintained, but now on a more intensive scale. The new assemblage, known after the site of *Ewart Park*, incorporates Continental material of the *Carp's-Tongue Sword Complex* (Savory 1948; Briard 1965), including the long sword with a narrowed point (after which the industry is named), characteristic bag-shaped chapes, knives of hog's back and triangular form, various types of socketed axe, socketed knives, pegged and socketed spearheads, various chisels and gouges, and several decorative attachments of which the so-called 'bugle-shaped' objects are the most characteristic (Figure 4.5, p. 77). In Britain the locally produced leaf-shaped sword of Ewart Park type occurs in considerable numbers throughout the whole of the country and serves as a linking feature between the *Carp's-Tongue Sword Complex* of the south-east and the regional industries of the north and west, which can be defined largely

by typological variations in their socketed axes.

In addition to the cast bronze implements just described, vessels and shields of beaten bronze make their appearance in the British Isles from the tenth century, or perhaps a little earlier, as a result of far-flung contacts with central Europe. One group of vessels to arrive, the high-shouldered situlae known as Kurd buckets, find their way into Wales and Ireland, where some were modified by Irish smiths and later copied, giving rise to a distinctive Irish-British type which appeared in small numbers in the north and west in the first half of the seventh century (Figures 17.1, p. 448 and 17.6, p. 454). Broadly contemporary was the manufacture of bronze cauldrons, the earliest of which, from Colchester and Shipton, are thought to have originated at the end of the second millennium in the wake of contacts with central Europe and were probably manufactured in southern Britain. Early in the first millennium Ireland seems to have taken over as the main production centre (Gerloff 1987) whence cauldrons were exported along the Atlantic sea-ways.

The duality of the exchange contacts between Britain and the Continent implied by the importation of bronze vessels – a central European Rhine route and possibly a Mediterranean Atlantic route – is also reflected in the origins of the beaten bronze shields, which give rise to local types widely distributed over most of the British Isles by the eighth century (Coles 1962a). More recent work has indicated a possible Hungarian origin for the type a century or two earlier and the transmission of the idea may have come via Denmark (Burgess 1974, 205; Thrane 1975, 79–81). Other exotic types found their way in at this time, principally from central and northern Europe. Among these must be mentioned the first appearance of bronze fittings appropriate to horse harness, which surely implies the introduction of more sophisticated methods of harnessing and possibly the greatly increased practice of horse-riding. Such developments are largely in parallel with those discernible in Europe during the Hallstatt B phase of the Urnfield culture.

Behind the complexity and the detail of the early first-millennium bronze industry, it is possible to discern several general trends, not the least of which is the development of numerous local schools of craftsmen specializing in the production of the more sophisticated objects such as the buckets, cauldrons and shields, all in beaten metal. The swords too, with their rapid and subtle evolution, were clearly made by specialists; many of these, to judge by the distribution pattern, were centred upon the Lower Thames, where new foreign imports were evidently carefully studied and improved upon. Less skill would have been required for the production of the smaller cast implements and, as might be expected, intensive regionalization is

recognizable, representing the distribution of the products of single smiths or, at the most, small schools; craftsmen in the remoter parts sometimes worked in alloys and made types long outdated by advances in the more forward areas. In the south-east innovations kept appearing, partly because of native inventiveness and partly because of widespread trading contacts, particularly with northern and western France, which were maintained over several centuries. Thus by the end of the eighth century a wide range of weapons, tools, ornaments and other utensils was being manufactured and traded on an unprecedented scale, vigorous local production centres maintained high standards of inventiveness, and a common market existed between Britain and Atlantic Europe. Superimposed upon this was a well-defined pattern of smaller-scale exchanges with northern Europe across the North Sea. It was with this area that the first contacts with the Hallstatt C communities of the eighth to seventh century developed.

Burials

The best-known aspect of the culture of the thirteenth to eighth century is the burial rite (Ellison 1980a; Bradley 1981). The dead were cremated and frequently, but by no means invariably, placed in urns, sometimes buried in urnfields of considerable size: more than 100 burials at Ardleigh, Essex; 104 at Moordown, Bournemouth and 100+ at Kimpton, Hants. In many cases it can be shown that urnfields grew up around earlier barrows, as, for example, at Steyning, Sussex, where at least thirty-two urned and four un-urned cremations were inserted into an existing Middle Bronze Age barrow; at Latch Farm, Hants, more than ninety cremations, mostly urned, were found in a similar relationship. A further example is provided by the small barrow just north of the Itford Hill settlement. Here the central cremation was contained in a Middle Bronze Age urn to one side of which was a group of cremations representing between fourteen and nineteen individuals, some contained in vessels closely similar to those found on the settlement site. Presumably this cemetery, together perhaps with others, served the settlement. It is tempting to see the burials as those of a single kinship group.

Another impressive example of continuity is provided by the cemetery at Kimpton, Hants. The cemetery began in the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age focused on one or more large sarsen stones and developed as an urn cemetery associated with a complex platform of flints, the latest burials dating to the end of the seventh century BC. Thus it remained in use as a burial place for a period of some 1,500 years.

The Latch Farm excavation gives a clear indication of the range of burial ritual employed: frequently cremations were in upended urns placed in shallow pits; sometimes, however, the pots were set upright in the ground and in several cases subsidiary vessels, presumably containing offerings of food and drink, were included. Some examples, usually those placed upright, were covered with stone slabs set flush with the surface of the ground and were therefore possibly intended to be visible. Two post-holes were also recognized, which might have belonged to wooden markers. The burials are usually clustered together without apparent order, but sometimes, as at Ardleigh and at Pokesdown, Hants, groups and isolated burials were strung out in a linear arrangement which suggests the directional growth of the cemetery. At Barnes, Isle of Wight, between ten and fifteen urns were laid in a circle, 3–4 m in diameter, implying a considerable degree of forward planning, unless it is assumed that all the cremations were interred at the same time.

Burial beneath barrows continued alongside the urnfield rite. In Wessex it is estimated that 12 per cent of the excavated barrows contained primary Deverel–Rimbury cremations but the barrows are generally only about half the size of the earlier barrows. A typical example was excavated at Plaitford, Hants, where two urns were found set in a shallow pit beneath a small cairn of clay, sand and pebbles, in which had been set a vertical marker post. Over the cairn had been heaped a circular mound 1.5 m high and 10.7 m in diameter. The use of a vertical marker post has also been noted at several urnfield sites.

The urnfield rite was also practised in other parts of the country. At Bromfield, Salop, an arc-shaped urnfield of urned and un-urned cremations has been totally excavated, producing three radiocarbon dates from the seventh to the ninth centuries. Another urnfield at Ryton-on-Dunsmoor, Warwickshire, yielded a series of dates from the tenth to ninth centuries. In Wales and Scotland urnfields are rare, but urned burials are often found as secondary interments in earlier barrows and cairns, and less frequently as primary burials beneath small cairns.

Regional and interregional systems

In recent years much effort has been expended in an attempt to formulate the social and economic systems which allowed the later Bronze Age communities to articulate, and to discover, the trajectories of development apparent in the period as a whole. This work is, of necessity, based on a grossly inadequate database and is highly speculative even though the individual theories appear to have a

degree of coherence within the available data. Yet, putting these reservations aside, a number of valuable generalizing statements can be made.

Perhaps the most striking observation to emerge is the massive cultural continuity which spans the period from about 2000–700 BC. Traditional burial sites continue to be used throughout (Ellison 1980a) and there is an increasing body of evidence to suggest a degree of continuity in the choice of settlement locations (e.g. Gingell 1980). Against this background may be placed the dynamics of climatic change. Current work suggests a climatic optimum in the period 1300–1000 BC and a rapid decline in the next three centuries. The magnitude of these changes cannot have failed to have affected marginal areas such as the moors of the south-west, the Welsh hills and the northern uplands where considerable fluctuations would have occurred in the maximum altitude of effective cultivation. In the south-east it is doubtful if the local communities noticed the change at all. Burgess (1985) has hypothesized a period of disease and rapid population decline concurrent with the climatic deterioration beginning about 1000 BC. The model he uses, based on Roman and medieval evidence, may not, however, be entirely applicable in a non-urban situation.

Another factor needing to be considered is the possible effect on fertility of the eruption of the Hekla volcano on Iceland in 1159 BC. The eruption sent huge clouds of ash into the atmosphere and traces of it have been identified in Scottish peat bogs. Mike Baillie, studying tree rings of the period from samples found in Ireland, has argued convincingly of decade-long ‘biological catastrophe’ during which time there was hardly any tree ring growth (Baillie 1995). Whether or not the eruption caused widespread devastation throughout the British Isles is a matter of debate (Buckland *et al.* 1997) which will only be resolved by the discovery of suitable dendrochronological samples from elsewhere in the country.

Developments in British bronze technology must be seen in the broader European scene. The demand for raw materials such as tin and to a lesser extent copper, by the developing Mediterranean states, created a complex network of trade and exchange which bound the coastal communities of southern Britain closely to the Continent, thus ensuring a constant interchange of ideas and technology. Various regions of Britain, favoured by virtue of their geographical location, such as the Thames valley and the Solent coast, remained significant interfaces between Britain and the Continent throughout much of the period and were, not surprisingly, zones of innovation.

On a more regional scale the Middle and Late Bronze Age of southern Britain, where the dataset is now considerable, has been

subjected to detailed consideration (Ellison 1980b, 1981). Sites like Norton Fitzwarren, Martin Down, Rams Hill and Highdown are seen as foci where regional exchange was articulated, while the study of artefact distribution demonstrates a complex system of small-scale interlinking exchange networks the origin of which is thought to lie in the development of an established mixed farming regime after the middle of the second millennium. This development paves the way for what is to follow in the Iron Age.

Attempts have also been made to consider the relationship of the chalklands of southern Britain and their peripheral interfaces with the Continent – the Thames valley and the Solent coast (Barrett and Bradley 1980b and c; Bradley 1980, 1981). The early Deverel–Rimbury cemeteries of the Solent are here seen as broadly contemporary with the rich Wessex burials of inland Wessex, the coastal zone growing in strength as the wealth of the inland communities declined in the thirteenth and twelfth centuries. By the end of the Bronze Age the Wessex communities are thought to be in a state of stress, with large areas, previously arable, being abandoned and perhaps given over to cattle ranching, while the centre of innovation now focuses on the Thames corridor. Views such as these, while inherently plausible, depend on close chronological arguments based on radiocarbon dates and may well prove to be oversimple generalizations. None the less the exercise has considerable value in focusing on the social dynamics which must lie behind the patterning evident in the archaeological material.

The Middle to Late Bronze Age was a period of transition from the simple agricultural regimes of Neolithic to Early Bronze Age, to the settled and intensive exploitation which typified the Iron Age and Roman period. The economic strategies, settlement patterns and much of the technology developed in the period 1500–700 BC paved the way for the Iron Age, and in the emergence of a hierarchic social system, evident in the diversity of settlement type from about 1000 BC, we can discern one of the principal motive forces which was to dominate the later first millennium.

4

Regional groupings

An overview

The British Isles presents a varied landscape – a cluster of disparate ecozones within which societies have structured their existence. Sometimes and in some places similar attributes of culture were shared over considerable regions: on other occasions distinct cultural packages were strictly localized. Within this variation is embedded much information about identity and political systems, about the constraints of landscape and networks of communication, and about the relationship of the British community to developing world systems. It is the task of the archaeologist to identify patterns within the material evidence and to attempt to interpret them in terms of past communities and their trajectories of change. In this chapter we will consider, by way of introduction, some of the broader issues of regionalism. Subsequent chapters will look in more detail at different categories of evidence such as pottery styles, variation within settlement structures and patterns of exchange.

The geography of Britain and its relationship to the Ocean and the Continent have, throughout time, imposed a structure on human societies and will continue to do so. There are many ways of approaching questions. In the 1930s Cyril Fox argued that the country should be divided into a highland and a lowland zone, the divide running roughly from the western edge of the North York Moors to the eastern edge of Dartmoor and Exmoor (Fox 1932) ([Figure 4.1](#)). Although generally out of favour for a long while, because it was seen to be ‘geographical determinism’, the concept is not entirely without value in providing an explanatory background for broad regional patterning that can be recognized in the archaeological data. Lying behind Fox’s divide are three immutable factors which reinforce each other: the contrast between the old hard rocks of the north and west and the softer newer rocks of the south and east; the much moister climate of the west and north; and the different patterns of communication which bind the two zones, with the south and east looking to the Continent and the north and west to the Atlantic. These simple geographical truths provide constraints and opportunities which help to mould socio-economic systems.

In attempting to understand the variety evident in the archaeological data for the Iron Age the Atlantic/Continental divide is an important construct ([Figure 4.2](#)). The sea provided an essential means of communication which, on the one hand, bound the south and east coasts of Britain to the Continent through an intricate network of exchange systems while on the other it provided a broad corridor of communication linking the Atlantic-facing communities of the island. The east–west divide thus created was a significant cultural fault line. There are other tantalizing hints that maritime contact around the south and east coasts of Britain may, from time to time, have bound distant communities together. These matters will be explored later in [chapter 17](#).

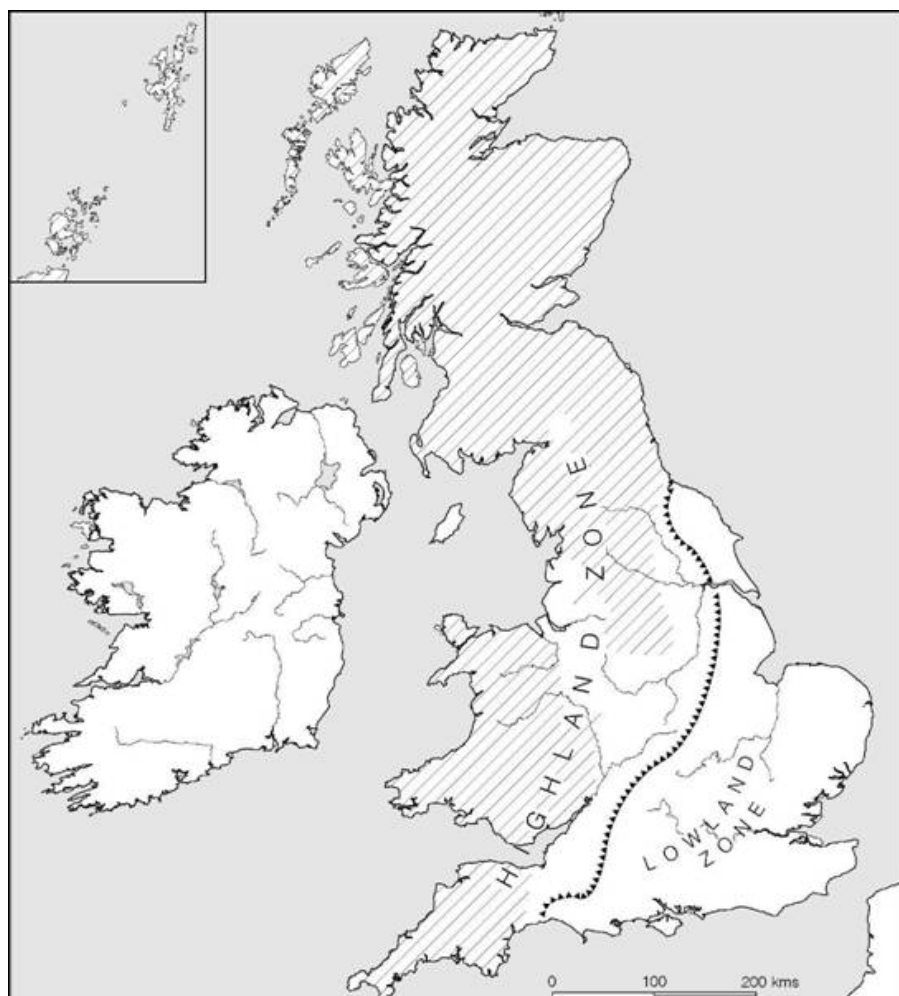


Figure 4.1 *The Highland and Lowland Zones of Britain (source: Fox 1932).*

Simple highland/lowland or Atlantic/Continental divides are at best coarse-grained generalizations and it has to be realized that the British countryside is, in reality, a palimpsest of ecological micro-regions linked together by varied networks of communication. The work of historical geographers, studying the more recent periods, amply brings out the patchwork nature of the landscape and its dramatic effects on human populations during the last thousand years (Roberts and Wrathmell 2002). Studies of this kind show what can be achieved with a high- resolution database. The evidence for the Iron Age is, by comparison, uneven, partial and ill- focused. Yet that said, it does allow something of the cultural variation across the regions to be appreciated.



Figure 4.2 *Zones of contact between Britain and the Continent (source:*

Broadly speaking, evidence for regional variation falls into one of three categories: settlement form; artefact typology or style; and belief system. The first, settlement form, is largely a reflection of the socio-economic system which is itself closely controlled by geographical factors. Artefact typology and style variation work at rather different levels. Some artefact types, such as tools, weapons or élite gear, may be distributed over large areas through extensive networks of exchange at an élite level, while other commodities, such as containers for salt or quernstones, may owe their patterns of distribution to quite different economic imperatives embedded within social systems. Style preferences on the other hand – shown for example in pottery decoration or favoured types of personal ornaments – may well reflect a community's sense of identity or kinship. The third category – belief systems – is more difficult to discern in the archaeological record, but when manifest in burial ritual it can be taken as an indicator of social coherence at a regional level.

To complicate matters further we have to contend with the trajectory of time: regional groupings identifiable in one period may be re-formed in another. To what extent this can be taken as evidence of social or political change has to be considered separately in each case.

Regional variation in settlement form: an overview

In chapters 12–14 extensive consideration will be given to the archaeology of settlement: here only the broad patterning will be outlined. Standing back from the detail it is possible to divide the varied settlement forms of Britain into four basic types (Figure 4.3). In the west and north, including the south-west peninsula, west Wales, western Scotland and the Western Isles, and the Northern Isles of Orkney and Shetland, the landscape is dominated by small strongly defended homesteads referred to now by a variety of names: *rounds* in Cornwall, *raths* in Wales and *brochs* and *duns* in Scotland. These settlements represent single family units and are often quite densely scattered throughout the landscape. Over much of eastern England and the Midlands open settlements, sometimes of considerable extent, seem to be the norm. Enclosures are also known throughout the area and some of them seem to represent clusters of several family units. Further north, stretching across the country from the Yorkshire and

Northumberland coast to Cumberland, settlement is characterized by homesteads enclosed within palisaded or banked and ditched enclosures. Finally in southern Britain, the Welsh borderland and southern and eastern Scotland, the landscape is dominated by hillforts which must represent the communal activity of large groups of people. In addition to the hillforts there are a variety of settlements of various kinds, ranging from quite large enclosed farms in the south to strongly defended homesteads in the north.

A broad characterization in these very general terms is, inevitably, a simplification but it does reflect the variety evident in the settlement pattern across the country. Within each of the zones there is, of course, much variation from one region to another and there are also quite significant changes over time.

The differences we can recognize at this level of generalization seem to echo climatic differences between the wetter west and the drier east, suggesting that the two zones may have encouraged different agricultural regimes, and it is this constraint that may have determined the settlement systems. The hillfort-dominated zone of central southern Britain reflects a different socio-economic system which may be related in part to a distinctive regional subsistence strategy and in part to the frontier' situation of this region between the two stable and deep-rooted systems to the east and west.

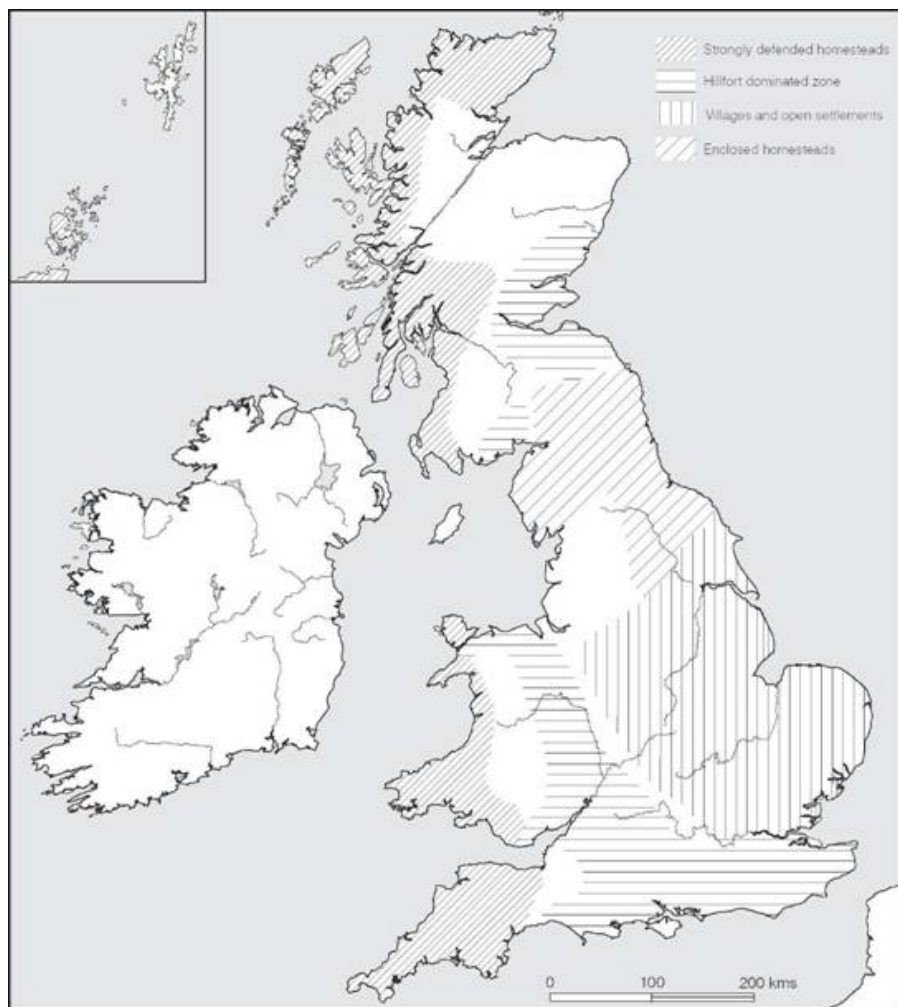


Figure 4.3 *Zones of differing settlement form (source: author).*

The broad regional system sketched out here holds good for the Early and Middle Iron Age, but towards the end of the second century BC changes begin to be apparent as the south-east of Britain is drawn closer and closer into the exchange network of the Roman world – a theme taken up in detail in chapter 10. From this time onwards significant changes can be detected, with the south-east developing large nucleated settlements (oppida) and the rural settlements taking on a more diffuse form, some of them becoming quite large. Coinage was adopted throughout this region, and by the first century AD it is possible to identify a core zone which had developed a quite sophisticated political and economic structure with a periphery of coin- using tribes around. Beyond them, in the north and west, life

seems to have continued much as before.

It can be argued that this reorientation in the south-east of Britain was occasioned by the rapid development of trading opportunities with the Roman world. In other words a change in the political geography of Gaul empowered the communities of south-eastern Britain with new economic opportunities which, when realized, distorted indigenous regional trajectories.

Regional variation in bronze typology: eighth to fifth centuries

In the period from the eighth to the fifth centuries BC bronze was still widely used for the manufacture of tools and weapons and it is conventional to use bronze typology as a convenient way to divide the period into phases (Figure 2.2, p. 32). According to our present understanding of chronology, the early part of the eighth century saw the end of the Ewart Park tradition and the beginning of the Llyn Fawr phase which lasted to about 600 BC. Throughout this period the predominant weapon was the sword, first the British Ewart Park sword and later the Gündlingen type, most examples of which were made in Britain in imitation of Continental varieties. Another type of sword, known as the Carp's-Tongue Sword, is also found in the south-east of the country early in this period but usually in scrap hoards with other distinctive material, suggesting the importation of recycled raw material from France. The two indigenous sword types are found quite widely distributed across the British Isles (Burgess 1969a, Figure 12), but among the other items made in bronze, most notably the socketed axes, a number of distinctive regional groupings can be identified (Figure 4.4).

The Carp's-Tongue Sword tradition

This assemblage, generally found in scrap hoards in the south-east of Britain, includes a highly distinctive sword type, with purse-shaped chapes, decorated spearheads, socketed axes, single-edged razors and a variety of decorative attachments (Figure 4.5). The hoards are concentrated in the Thames valley, East Anglia and Kent and along the Sussex coast, with a scattering extending into Dorset, a pattern which reflects the importance of the sea routes by which the scrap material is thought to have been transported to Britain. The distribution is closely comparable to that of the LBA Plain ware pottery and suggests that a large area of south-east Britain, bounded roughly by the Jurassic Ridge, shared in a broadly similar culture by the eighth century BC. After this, as we will see in the next chapter, this same region retains

its identity. It remains a heavy pottery-using zone but it is now possible to subdivide it into a number of discrete regions based on distinctive local styles of pottery decoration (pp. 90–7).



Figure 4.4 *Distribution of the major bronze traditions in the eighth to fifth centuries (source: author).*

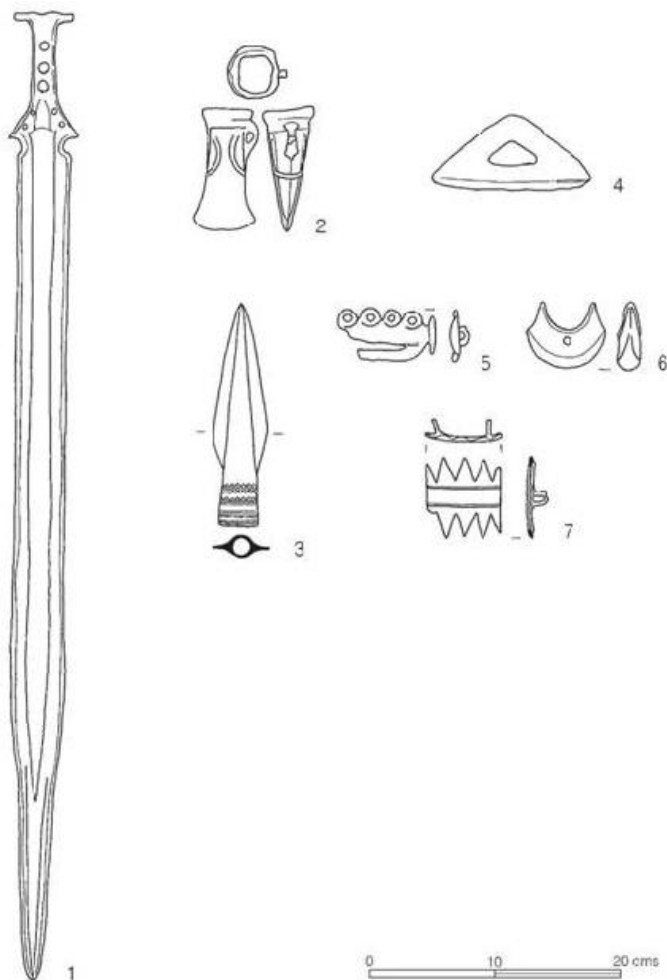


Figure 4.5 Implements and weapons of the Carp's-Tongue Sword Complex: 1 sword from the river Thames; 2 socketed axe from the Thames at Brentford, Middx.; 3 socketed spear from Chingford, Essex; 4 knife from Eaton, Norwich; 5 'belt attachment' from the Thames at Sion Reach; 6 chape from Leving- ton, Suffolk; 7 leather attachment from Watford, Herts. (source: Burgess 1969b).

The Llantwit–Stogursey tradition

In south Wales, principally Monmouthshire and Glamorganshire and spreading into Somerset, Devon and Cornwall, a group of related domestic bronze implements has been defined and named after two of the important hoards (Burgess 1969a, 19–21; also Fox and Hyde 1939, 390; Savory 1958, 37; McNeil 1973). Distinctive among the tools represented is the socketed axe with a heavily moulded lip, decorated

with parallel ribbing on the two faces. The type is frequently found in association with a range of tools including socketed gouges and tanged chisels. Varieties of the axe also occur in the Llyn Fawr and Cardiff hoards together with horse harness-fittings indicating an eighth- to seventh-century date which is further supported by occasional associations with material of the Carp's-Tongue Sword Complex. Scattered finds, a few hoards and occasional moulds for axes have turned up in south-west Britain, implying the use of the Severn estuary and western sea approaches for trading – no doubt in connection with the exploitation of Cornish tin – but the main distribution of hoards is centred upon south Wales. Pottery does not appear to have been a significant part of the material culture of this region.

The Broadward tradition

The Broadward group, named after a Herefordshire hoard, can be defined in terms of an assemblage of weapons which includes swords of Ewart Park type, chapes and spearheads, among which a barbed variety is characteristic (Burgess, Coombs and Davies 1972) ([Figure 4.6](#)). The contrast between the predominantly domestic character of south-east Welsh hoards and the military nature of the Broadward hoards may possibly reflect a difference in social structure. The area covered by the group extends from Pembrokeshire through central Wales into Cheshire and from there into the Welsh borderland, while some of the diagnostic weapons are found even further afield. The territory is well suited to a basically pastoral economy which would be consistent with a warlike society. The lack of pottery is another feature suggestive of pastoralism, since under such living conditions pottery would tend to break easily and would be better replaced by leather, wooden or metal containers. Indeed, there is clear evidence from the later forts in the Welsh borderland that the communities remained largely aceramic into the fifth or fourth century BC.

The Llantissilio tradition

The north of Wales appears to have been a technological backwater in the eighth to sixth centuries, receiving exotic types from Ireland and other parts of England and Wales rather than developing its own. A degree of conservatism is shown by the retention of the late type of palstave, which had been replaced by socketed axes elsewhere.

The famous Parc y Meirch hoard ([Figure 17.7](#), p. 455 and pp. 451–4), containing horse harness-fittings of eighth- to seventh-century date, belongs geographically to this group. Its presence clearly demonstrates the extensive trading systems which, whether directly or indirectly via Ireland, allowed exotic north European objects to be

transported to this relatively isolated territory.

Excavations on a number of north Welsh hillforts, in particular Moel y Gaer, Breiddin and Dinorben, have indicated a long tradition of occupation, extending back in some cases to c. 1000 BC and continuing largely uninterrupted throughout the first millennium, during which time defences were modified and internal structures were rearranged and rebuilt. The Breiddin has produced a particularly impressive range of plain coarse pottery, together with a number of items of Late Bronze Age metalwork representing occupation in the period 1000–700; but thereafter pottery and metalwork are sparse even though the radiocarbon dates indicate continued use. The hillfort of Moel y Gaer, which appears to have been constructed in the seventh or sixth century, is almost devoid of finds. Moel Hiraddug in the Vale of Clwyd produced several radiocarbon dates suggestive of occupation going back to the sixth and fifth centuries while the presence of a fine La Tène I fibula indicates occupation continuing into the fourth or third century.

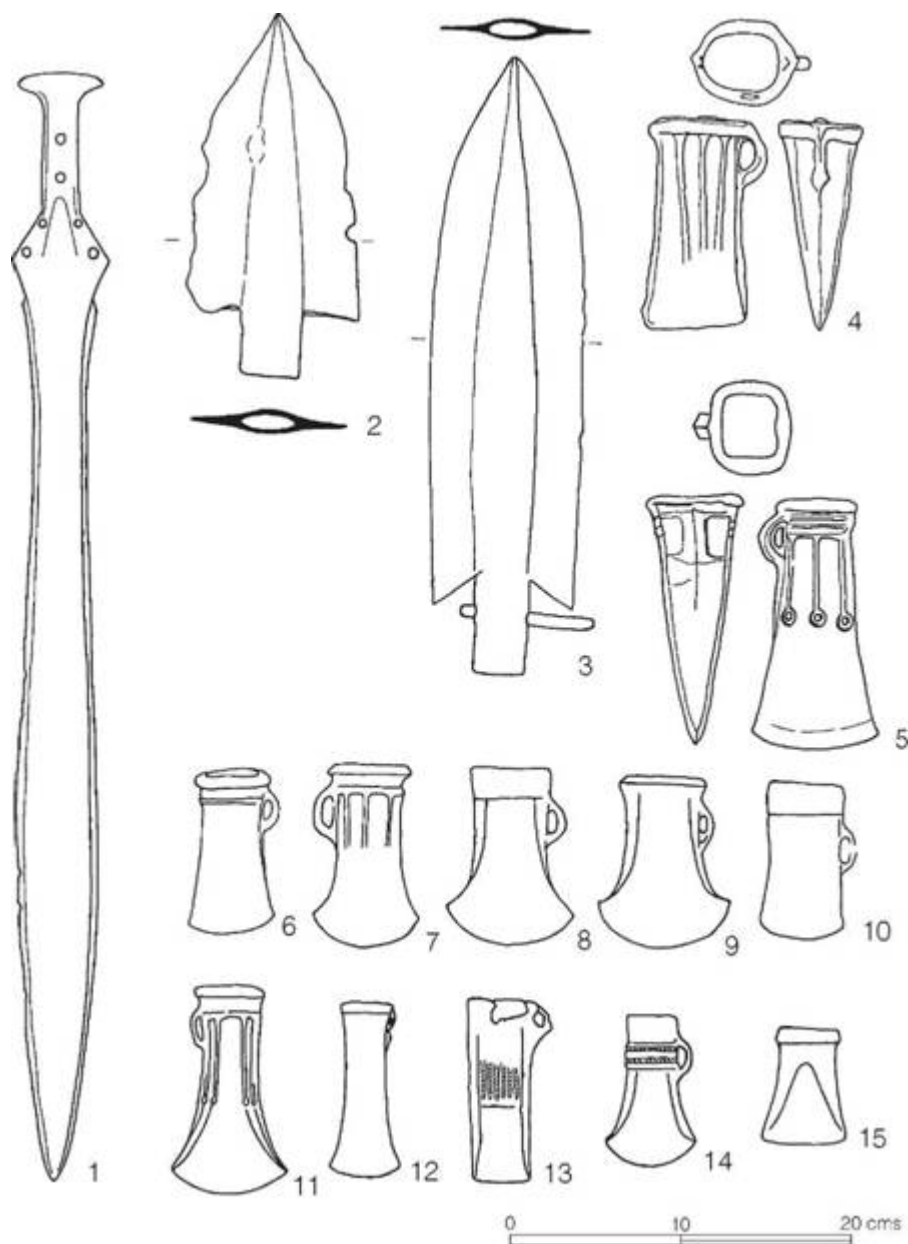


Figure 4.6 Implements and weapons of various bronze traditions of the seventh to fifth centuries: 1 sword from Ewart Park, Northumberland; 2 spear from Broadward, Heref. spear from Plaistow Marshes, Essex; 4–15 socketed axes: 4 Llantwit Major, Glam.; 5 Leeds(?); 6 Dalduff, Ayr.; 7 Shetland; 8 Tomintoul, Banff.; 9 Culloden, Inverness; 10 Mawcarse, Kinross.; 11 Delvine, Perth; 12 Annan, Dumfries.; 13 Carse Loch, Kirkcudbright.; 14 Birse, Aberdeen; 15 Angus(?) (sources: 1–5 Burgess 1969b; 6–15 Coles 1962b).

The Heathery Burn tradition

Throughout the seventh and sixth centuries a well-defined bronzeworking tradition, called here the *Heathery Burn tradition*, served northern England.

The extensive collection of material from the Heathery Burn Cave, Co. Durham, may be regarded as representative of the range of artefacts in use. The maximum distribution of this range, typified by the Yorkshire type of three-ribbed socketed axe, was centred upon Yorkshire, Northumberland and County Durham with outliers in adjacent counties. The Heathery Burn deposit is particularly valuable, not only for its cart- and harness-fittings and bucket referred to below (p. 451), but also for the associated metal types, including a Covesea bracelet, a Ewart Park sword, spearheads of northern type, socketed knives and chisels, and a group of Yorkshire socketed axes. A fragment of copper ingot, a casting jet and half a bronze mould for a Yorkshire axe suggest the probability of local metalworking. Non-metallic finds from the cave include jet armlets, stone spindle whorls, a range of bone tools and fittings, and five sherds of pottery belonging to coarse-shouldered vessels with internally flattened rims.

There is a substantial overlap between the southern extension of the Yorkshire axe distribution, pushing down through Lincolnshire to East Anglia, and the northern part of the West Harling–Fengate and Staple Howe ceramic traditions defined below (pp. 94–6) on the basis of their distinctive pottery. At Staple Howe a Yorkshire axe, jet armlets and other items of the non-metallic material culture are shared with the Heathery Burn Cave, and again at Scarborough a Yorkshire axe was found on the settlement site. Such associations are a salutary reminder of the fact that groupings defined on ceramic grounds may have little relationship to those depending upon the distribution of bronze types. The two classes of evidence are seldom mutually compatible. Nevertheless, the dense distribution of the Yorkshire axes emphasizes a zone of contact from the eighth to the sixth centuries which deserves recognition (Burgess and Miket 1976). At present, however, it is difficult to compare the distribution of metal types to other cultural traits in the same region.

The Traprain–Hownam tradition

The eastern coast of northern England and Scotland, from the Tyne north to the Esk in the county of Angus, exhibits some degree of cultural unity which can be defined principally through the distribution of locally manufactured bronze implements such as the Traprain Law type of socketed axe (Coles 1962b) and British varieties of Hallstatt swords. To these should be added imported Hallstatt

types, including a Hallstatt sword (Cowen's class b) from Cambuskeneth, Stirling, the Horsehope cart- and harness-fittings, the Adabrock bronze bowl (Figure 4.7), razors from Traprain Law and Kinleith, Midlothian, and a group of sunflower swan's-neck pins (Figure 17.16, p. 466). Evidently close contact was maintained with mainland Europe throughout the period, allowing a wide range of exotic material to reach this part of Britain.

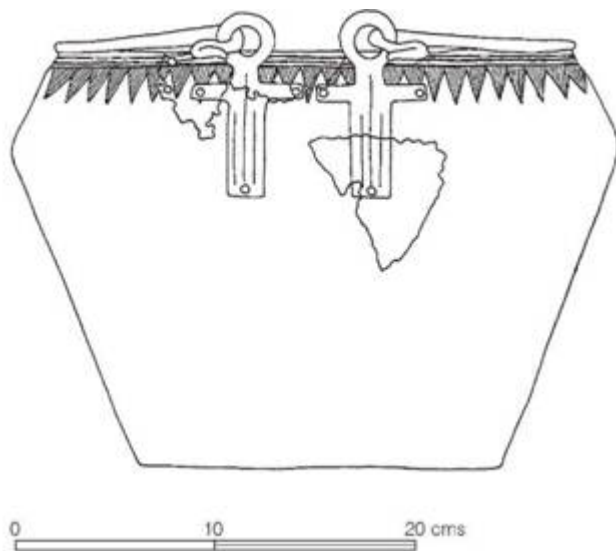


Figure 4.7 *The Adabrock bronze bowl, Lewis (source: Coles 1962b).*

Within this region a number of settlement sites have been discovered and a few excavated. Mostly they are palisaded enclosures containing one or more circular timber huts. Radiocarbon dates suggest occupation began in the seventh to sixth centuries. These early settlements and their sparse and virtually aceramic material culture have been used to identify the Hownam culture (MacKie 1969a, 21).

The Covesea–Abernethy tradition

Between the Firth of Forth and the Moray Firth, and overlapping with the northern distribution of the Traprain–Hownam sites, lies the Covesea–Abernethy group, which can be defined by both metal implements and distinctive techniques of hillfort construction. The metal types include the Covesea armlet with unevenly expanded terminals, a type thought to have been imported into Britain from northern Europe in the eighth to seventh centuries together with the pendant necklets of Braes of Gight and Wester Ord (Coles 1962b, 39–44). Locally made products are also represented, including the short

socketed axes with heavy multiple neck-mouldings, named after the Meldrum hoard, which are found in eastern Scotland, mainly but not invariably north of the Forth.

From the Sculptor's Cave at Covesea, Moray, and Balmashanner, Angus, metalwork has been found in association with a widely distributed group of pottery belonging to the rather generalized flat-rimmed class. The north-east Scottish group of pottery belongs to the rather generalized type named Covesea ware, and is thought to have ultimately originated in northern Europe (Coles 1962b, 44). If this derivation is correct, it might suggest some form of folk movement into north-east Scotland in or about the seventh century, introducing both pottery and the new metal objects, but such a view is difficult to substantiate.

While the bronzeworking traditions were eventually replaced by ironworking, other aspects of the material culture together with the timber-lacing of forts continued in use over many centuries, giving rise to a broad continuum sometimes known as the Abernethy culture (MacKie 1969a, 16–21).

It will be evident from the foregoing paragraphs that the Traprain–Hownam tradition and the Covesea–Abernethy group have much in common. Hallstatt and Hallstatt-derived artefacts extend far into the Covesea–Abernethy region and the characteristic palisaded settlements are now being discovered north of the Firth of Forth. Similarly, Covesea-style flat-rimmed pottery has been found at an occupation site at Green Knowe in Peeblesshire, well within the distribution patterns of the Traprain–Hownam group, and indeed a variety of flat-rimmed pottery is also known from Traprain Law itself. The distribution patterns of the Meldrum and Traprain Law axes also overlap, the Meldrum type extending across most of eastern Scotland from the border to the Moray Firth. In view of such a widespread similarity, it might be thought to be more reasonable eventually to treat the entire area as a single east Scottish group, abandoning the conventional terminology of a Tyne–Forth Hownam culture and a north-eastern Abernethy culture (MacKie 1969a, 20).

The Atlantic Province

The bronze tradition of the Atlantic Province is not well known, owing to a paucity of finds, but a bronze smith had established himself in one of the buildings at Jarlshof in Shetland, his presence indicated by fragments of clay moulds for swords, socketed axes and sunflower pins. The Jarlshof discovery raises interesting questions of mobility: was the smith an itinerant, one of a small group of specialists moving among the Northern and Western Isles or was he a permanent resident?

Regional aspects of material culture

In reviewing the surviving material culture of Iron Age date from the British Isles a sharp disparity can be recognized between material-rich and material-poor zones, always remembering of course that the organic component of the material culture – wood, leather and fabrics – does not normally survive except in waterlogged conditions. In very broad terms it can be said that the south-east of the country, south and east of a line from Swansea Bay to the mouth of the Tees, together with the Western and Northern Isles, is material-rich while the rest of the country is material-poor. But like all generalizations there needs to be some qualification. Much of the landscape of the material-poor zone is less congenial for settlement, and archaeological investigation has been significantly less intensive here, but, that said, many sites have been excavated on comparatively large scales, especially in south-eastern Scotland and Northumberland and Durham. Compare them area by area with their south-eastern counterparts and the dearth of material finds becomes very noticeable.

The phenomenon is of some potential interest but convincing explanations are not immediately apparent. Many years ago Stuart Piggott saw the contrast in terms of different production modes, the south-eastern economy being based on cereals while the northern economy was focused on pastoralism (Piggott 1958). Nearly fifty years of excavation, fieldwork and environmental studies have shown this to be too gross a simplification, not least since cereal production is well in evidence in the north, but it remains a distinct possibility that the economies of the two regions were differently balanced, with grain growing being maximized in the south where the climate was more congenial, facilitating the production of surpluses for exchange. This in turn may have led to social complexity, involving networks of exchange demanding a more varied material culture. If this is so then the economy and material culture of the northern zone may have reflected a simpler and more self-sufficient socio-economic system, and one more reliant on organic materials appropriate to the degree of mobility occasioned by a more livestock-oriented mode of production.

Another factor which may be relevant, at least in some part, is a difference in belief systems. In the south-east there is abundant evidence that the deposition of goods through propitiatory acts was deeply embedded in social behaviour (pp. 566–72) whereas in the northern zone such ‘offerings’ appear to be very much rarer. We argue later that in the south much of this propitiatory behaviour was associated with rituals ensuring the fertility of grain. A very high percentage of the material culture from southern sites can be shown to

come from propitiatory deposits. It could, therefore, be argued that the belief systems prevalent in the south actively encouraged production. At the same time they mitigated against the recycling of materials and enhanced the chance of archaeological discovery.

The contrasts between the material-rich and material-poor zones are striking. They clearly reflect marked differences in social, economic and belief systems. We should not, however, characterize the northern zone as ‘culturally impoverished’ – it may indeed have had a very rich material culture of woodworking, ornate leatherwork and elaborate woven fabrics – but it was culturally different, and in that difference lies an area of very real interest which deserves far more attention than it has hitherto received.

Identifying immigrant communities

Until about 1960 it was widely accepted that Britain had, during the Iron Age, received a number of immigrations from the Continent each introducing significant numbers of people sufficient to make a cultural impact on the indigenous population. As we have seen in chapter 1, these supposed immigrations provided the basis of the classificatory framework for the Iron Age. Grahame Clark’s famous attack on invasion hypotheses in British prehistory in 1966 dealt a death blow to the entire edifice, and in the decade of cheerful iconoclasm that followed all thought of immigration as the prime mover of cultural change was abandoned. Instead the indigenous nature of the British Iron Age was given great stress. As in all matters of this kind, the pendulum has swung too far. There can be no doubt at all that the communities of the south and east of Britain were in frequent, if not constant, contact with the adjacent Continent. The sea must at times have teemed with shipping. In such periods of interaction there may well have been a trickle of immigrants who would have merged imperceptibly with the native communities. On some occasions larger groups may have arrived, but unless they were numerous enough and determined enough to have maintained their alien identity over several generations they are unlikely now to be archaeologically visible, and their cultural contribution, like their genes, will have been absorbed into the indigenous pool.

Of all the ‘invasions’ and ‘migrations’ enthusiastically proposed in the formative years of Iron Age studies there are only two which seem to retain some possible credibility, the migration of an Early La Tène élite from north Gaul to Yorkshire in the fifth century BC and the arrival of settlers from Belgic Gaul in the late second or early first century BC. The question of the Belgae is bound up with the extensive comings and goings across the Channel in the Late Iron Age and will

be considered below (pp. 126–7) in that broader context, but the matter of the Early La Tène community in Yorkshire is relevant here since they constitute an archaeologically distinct group.

The Arras group

Most Early La Tène contacts between the Continent and southern Britain were on the basis of casual trading and exchange, but in eastern Yorkshire it is possible to distinguish a group of burials which have close connections with northern Gaul, allowing the possibility of some form of intrusive folk movement bringing with it burial traditions alien to those of the indigenous culture (Figure 4.8, also pp. 546–9). These new burials are conventionally referred to as the Arras culture, after the Yorkshire barrow cemetery partially examined for the first time in 1815. The Arras cemetery provides evidence of most of the rites characteristic of the Yorkshire burials: there were several inhumations buried with the remains of carts; some were covered by barrows constructed within rectangular ditched enclosures; the barrow mounds were invariably small; and the cemetery was large, containing between 100 and 200 graves. These elements are repeated on a number of sites, the more important of which include Dane's Graves, Driffield, Eastburn, Cowlam, Pexton Moor, Hunmanby, Huntow, Sawdon, Burton Fleming, Garton Slack and Wetwang Slack.

A distributional analysis of the rite of cart burial shows that two distinct methods were employed: either the carts were placed upright in the graves, sometimes with recesses cut for the wheels so that the body of the cart could rest on the ground surface; or the carts were dismantled, the wheels being placed flat. That burials of the first type were found on the limestone hills, while the second were restricted to the Wolds, suggests the possibility of some form of cultural distinction between the two areas – a suggestion further supported by the apparent absence of large cemeteries, as opposed to isolated barrows, on the limestone hills in reverse of the situation on the Wolds.

The surviving grave-goods can be divided into two groups: the cart- and harness-fittings, and personal ornaments and offerings. The first category covers a wide range of types including iron cart-tyres, nave hoops and miscellaneous wheel-fittings, linchpins to prevent the wheels from coming loose, bronze pole sheaths, three-link horse-bits and various terret-rings from the leather harnesses. Detailed comparisons with Continental types (Stead 1965, 28–45; 1979, 7–39) show that while the British versions were closely related to them, they are nevertheless sufficiently distinctive to be considered the result of several generations of local development. Not one of the cart- or harness-fittings at present known can be regarded as a direct import from France.

Among the ornaments, on the other hand, there is an assemblage from Cowlam which is clearly of direct Continental inspiration. It includes a fibula of Münsingen Ia type, a bracelet with ‘tongue-in-glove’ terminals, expanded at five points around the circumference, which can be paralleled in Alsace and Burgundy in Early La Tène contexts, and a necklace composed of seventy blue and white beads. Again, parallels can be found for such necklaces in the phase Ia graves at Münsingen although they do occur later. The Cowlam burial is the earliest assemblage that can be defined within the Arras culture, probably dating to the early part of the fourth century: it might reasonably be thought to represent the burial of first-generation imported trinkets. The Cowlam bracelet and necklace are similar to finds from the Arras cemetery, where knobbed and ribbed bracelets of Early La Tène type provide a further link with Burgundy and Switzerland. The remainder of the ornaments – the inlaid and involuted brooches, the incised bronze mirror, the ring-headed pins, finger-rings, pendants, toilet sets and toggles – all belong to a decidedly British tradition and must be later developments influenced more by internal British traditions than by Continental ideas.

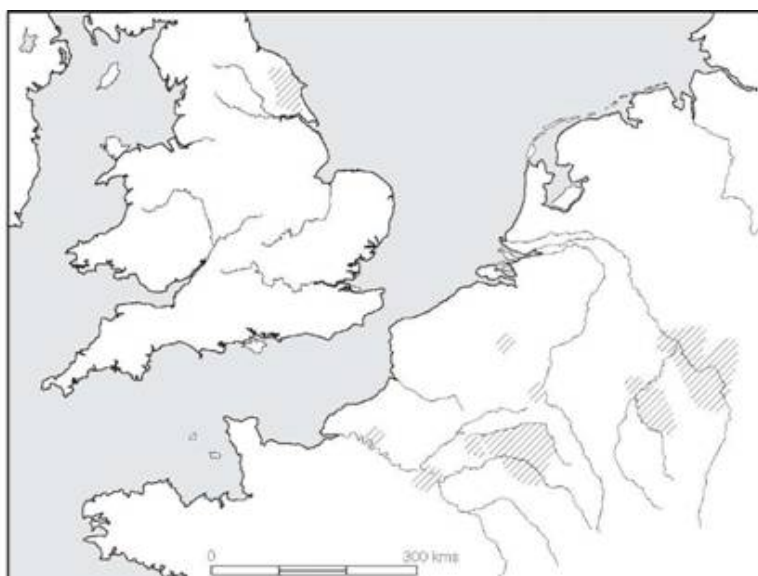


Figure 4.8 Early La Tène vehicle burials (sources: various).

It is a distinct possibility that the Arras culture arose as the result of a folk movement into eastern Yorkshire late in the fifth or early in the fourth century. Thereafter local development modified the culture, but as late as the first century BC its alien origins were still apparent. A careful consideration of the niceties of burial rite and the typology of

the earliest group of artefacts has led Stead (1965) to propose a complex origin for the invaders, coming from the Burgundian area (where dismantled carts and the absence of weapons and pottery are similar to the British burials) via the Seine. In the Nanterre–Paris region part of the band remained to give rise to the Parisii, while those destined for Britain moved on, to found another community in Yorkshire, known to Ptolemy as the Parisi: the coincidence is noteworthy. The cultural affinities of the Pexton Moor burial, with its rectangular enclosure ditches and wheel pits, may however indicate that some part of the immigrant force had connections with the La Tène group in the Champagne. The alternative view, that the Arras phenomenon was a local development, the aristocracy adopting ‘foreign’ burial rites as a means of expressing status, has been persuasively argued by Higham (1987).

A close study of the Arras culture emphasizes some of the problems involved in recognizing immigrant communities by means of the archaeological record. Seldom is it possible to discover material of the first generation; what survives is more likely to belong to subsequent developments, which invariably diverge from the traditions of the homeland. Nevertheless, the Yorkshire evidence is impressive. It suggests small bands arriving, with little more than their personal equipment, and settling down among the natives in whose pottery traditions they shared. When time came for burial they maintained their own rituals, using a mortuary cart to bring the body to the grave and sometimes burying it with the dead. So strong were these religious practices that they remained dominant for several hundred years.

The debate has been further extended by the discovery, in 2001, of a single two-wheeled vehicle burial at Newbridge, just west of Edinburgh airport. The vehicle was buried intact, with its wheels accommodated in slots cut into the grave bottom. The associated harness-fittings in iron have close similarities to Continental types while a radiocarbon date of between 520–370 BC supports an Early La Tène date. Interpretation of an isolated find of this kind is difficult but it is tempting to see it as support for the idea that immigrants from northern Gaul, albeit in small numbers, may have reached many parts of eastern Britain but only in Yorkshire was their distinctive burial rite adopted.

Summary

Sufficient will have been said in this chapter to give some idea of the problems involved in attempting to discern regional patterns lying beneath the bewildering mass of archaeological data now available.

Patterns, albeit very incomplete, can be seen at all levels from the very broad distribution of settlement form to the very local distribution of a distinctive artefact type made by an individual craftsman. Different patterns have different meanings, and the true meanings, in contemporary social terms, are impossible for us now to hope to discover. At best the patterns we can recognize offer a structure which helps to contain the evidence.

All that said, the Iron Age landscape is likely to have been a vast patchwork of distinct social groups. Some will have retained a strict identity with agreed boundaries, adopting behaviour and overt symbols proclaiming their oneness and their differences from their neighbours. The Arras group, with their preference for a particular set of burial rituals, would seem to be a good example of this. But for much of the country the differences between the polities seem to be far more blurred, though this may be because of the limitations of the archaeological evidence. Only in the case of the ceramic evidence, to be reviewed in the next chapter, is it possible to glimpse the discrete patterns which may have come about as different polities, mainly in the south-east of the country – the material-culture-rich zone – found it necessary to express their ethnicity.

5

Regional groupings

The ceramic evidence

In this chapter we set out to examine regionality and change across time through the medium of one type of material culture – pottery. In seeking to establish regional patterns and chronologies pottery has a number of advantages. Over many areas of the country it is reasonably common and as a plastic medium it is highly sensitive to change – if the will is there to change it. A further advantage lies in the fact that regional sequences can be built up by means of stratigraphy and these can be linked to developments in neighbouring areas. In this way an interrelated pattern of contemporary *style-zones* can be discerned and can be defined objectively. Within each, given adequate stratigraphical sequences, it is possible to chart change and sometimes rate of change.

The concept of a style-zone is here used quite loosely to mean a defined geographical region within which, in a particular time frame, a distinctive range of pottery is commonly in use. There are, of course, difficulties with such a broad definition. Simple types of cooking vessel may be in common use over very large areas while finer decorated vessels may have a much more restricted distribution. In this case our definition of a style-zone will focus on the fine wares. But it is quite conceivable that a particular type of vessel may have been produced in a single centre for a limited period of time and, though highly distinctive, may not be entirely characteristic of a regional group. Similarly a particular vessel made and used in one style-zone may be exchanged and pass into a different style-zone. Problems of this kind are, to a large extent, alleviated by defining the style-zone in terms of a range of ceramic characteristics based on form, fabric and surface decoration, a number of which would be expected to be present at any one site within the style-zone.

Another potential difficulty is change through time. Within any style-zone it is likely that each vessel type or style will have a different life span. Thus, a coarse ware jar may remain little changed over a long period of time while a fine decorated vessel type may be in fashion for a shorter period, to be replaced by another. More to the point, each category of vessel may have a different trajectory of

change. Where then to draw the classificatory line between an early style- zone and a later one occupying broadly the same region? The principle adopted here is to allow that there may be ‘early’ and ‘late’ phases in any particular style-zone and to define the end of one style-zone and the beginning of the next on the basis of clearly observable dislocations in the ceramic tradition.

From what has been said, it will be clear that the definition of style-zones is something of an imperfect art. Yet, given all the shortcomings, it is now possible, for much of the south-east of Britain, to characterize the ceramic tradition spatially and chronologically. A brief summary of these schemes will be given in the pages to follow.

It is reasonable to ask what, other than simple classificatory convenience, the style-zones may mean in social, economic and political terms. At the very least a style-zone represents a region within which communities maintained contact with each other and shared a range of values. They may also represent regions within which specialist products were distributed through embedded exchange. But it is possible that, in some cases, the conscious choice of decorating pottery in a distinctive manner took with it a sense of communal identity and the desire to distinguish self from others living in neighbouring regions. In such a case pottery styles become a surrogate for ethnicity. Clearly it is one thing to define style-zones but quite another to interpret them in economic, social or political terms.

The discussion so far has been at a general level but in the specific context of there being an adequate ceramic record. In viewing the country as a whole it soon becomes clear that while some areas are ceramic-rich others are virtually aceramic ([Figure 5.10](#)). For this reason it has been possible to produce an intricate pattern of style-zones for the south-east of the country while for the west and north the review has, of necessity, to be far more sketchy, except, that is, for the Western and Northern Isles where pottery featured large in the material culture.

The south and east

Over the last three decades or so a number of large-scale excavations have produced useful stratified assemblages of pottery demonstrating local sequences, while increasing numbers of radiocarbon dates are allowing the date ranges of many of the styles to be suggested with a greater degree of confidence.

Standing back from the detail of the individual style-zones it is now possible to divide the ceramic development of the first millennium BC into five broad phases: LBA transitional (1100–800); Earliest Iron Age (800–600); Early Iron Age (600–400/300); Middle Iron Age

(400/300–100); Late Iron Age (100–c. AD 50). It should be stressed, however, that when using a shorthand of this kind we should allow for regional variation which may require the boundary dates to be modified by up to half a century. Continuity in the spatial patterning of some of the individual style-zones holds out fascinating possibilities for allowing such questions as ethnicity and the genesis of tribal configurations to be approached. At the end of this chapter we will summarize the salient points: further discussion of the possible socio-political interpretations will be reserved for a later chapter (pp. 588–94).

The LBA transitional phase: c. 1100–800/700 (Figure A:1)

Over much of south-eastern England, classic Deverel–Rimbury was followed by a period typified by assemblages of largely plain vessels. Many of the shapes were direct developments of earlier ‘buckets’ and ‘barrels’ but a new and consistent element, in the form of jars with high angled shoulders and smaller carinated bowls, now made an appearance. These angular forms may well have been inspired by metal vessels circulating in Britain at this time. ‘Plain ware’ assemblages of this kind have been discussed in detail by Barrett (1980), who prefers to refer to them as Post Deverel–Rimbury. His careful assessment of the available dating evidence suggests a period of currency spanning the ninth and eighth centuries, but a number of radiocarbon dates produced more recently suggest that pottery of this kind may have begun much earlier, perhaps as early as 1100 BC. A few examples will suffice to indicate the nature of the surviving material.

The characteristic pottery types represented at Eldon’s Seat (Encombe), on the Isle of Purbeck, include bucket- and barrel-shaped urns, often with applied finger-tipped cordons, plain cordons or bosses, which derive from local Bronze Age forms. In addition, however, there were several examples of the angular bowl type, some of which are large enough to be considered to be copies of metal situlae. The same range of forms is known from several other Dorset sites. At Eldon’s Seat, Chalbury and Kimmeridge the material is stratified beneath later assemblages which themselves date to an early stage in the Iron Age, probably the eighth to sixth centuries, a fact which tends to support a ninth- to eighth-century date for what has been called the Eldon’s Seat I assemblage.

Along the Sussex Downs a number of settlements belonging to this period are known, but in the absence of closed groups of stratified material it is necessary to distinguish them largely by typological considerations. Whetstones were recovered from the two settlements

on Plumpton Plain, Sussex, which are claimed to show signs of having been used for sharpening iron objects. If this evidence can be accepted, it would imply that they are likely to date to not much earlier than 800. The pottery from the sites was discussed in some detail by C.F.C. Hawkes (1935), who put forward the view that site A preceded site B, A dating from 1000 to 750 and B from 750 to 500. The principal differences in the two assemblages lay in the presence on site A of globular vessels with strap handles and incised decoration, related to the globular urns of the Deverel–Rimbury tradition, and their absence from site B. At site B, on the other hand, jars with high shoulders together with the characteristic carinated bowls appear, both of which look forward to later Iron Age forms. Hawkes' original arguments still seem to hold good, though the dating might be slightly adjusted to allow the change-over to centre upon 800 and not 750.

The significance of the Plumpton Plain sites is considerable, for not only do their ceramic assemblages demonstrate chronological differences, they also emphasize a marked continuity. Thus the large bucket- or barrel-shaped urns with applied bosses or finger-printed cordons occur in quantity on both sites and remain a constituent of local assemblages which can be more firmly dated to the sixth and fifth centuries. The suggestion that the Plumpton Plain settlements should be updated brings with it further implications for other Sussex sites. The pottery from Itford Hill, for example, is best paralleled at Plumpton Plain A, but that from New Barn Down is much closer to Plumpton Plain B. A detailed reassessment of the Sussex Bronze Age settlements, therefore, might well allow them to be arranged in a sequence stretching from before 1000 and continuing into the eighth or even the seventh century (Ellison 1978).

Large skeuomorphic carinated bowls, of the types considered here to belong to the eighth to seventh centuries, occur on a number of other coastal sites amid collections of pottery of various dates: at Kingston Buci, Highdown Hill and Castle Hill (Newhaven) in Sussex, and Mill Plain (Deal) and Minnis Bay in Kent. Related types are also known from the east coast at West Harling and Castle Hill, Scarborough. Coarse wares in Deverel–Rimbury tradition invariably occur alongside them, and from many of the sites items of bronze equipment of Late Bronze Age type are known.

Work in the Thames valley has produced a number of comparable assemblages for which a series of radiocarbon dates are available. Of particular significance are the settlements at Knights Farm and Aldermaston Wharf in Berkshire, Runnymede Bridge, Surrey, and Mucking, Essex. Taken together the data would suggest that the Plain ware tradition of the region could have begun before 1000 BC and continued into the seventh century, the majority of the dates

favouring the latter part of the period (Barrett 1980, 306–9). At Knights Farm a ‘Plain ware’ assemblage can be shown to have been succeeded by a typical Early All Cannings Cross decorated assemblage for which dates of the ninth to seventh centuries were obtained. The implication of this is that by the eighth century BC the Plain ware tradition was already being superseded by Wessex styles of decorated ware on the western fringes of the distribution. Further east Plain ware traditions may have continued at least into the seventh century.

The distribution of the LBA transitional Plain wares is predominantly south-eastern, with a strong emphasis on the coastal zone and the river valleys, particularly the Thames valley. It is in precisely this region that the contemporary metalwork of the Carp’s-Tongue and Ewart Park complexes concentrates.

The occurrence of a distinctive pottery tradition over much of south-eastern Britain and the coincidence of this distribution with that of the Ewart Park and Carp’s-Tongue metalwork raise a number of interesting issues. At the very least these factors imply extensive networks of communication, allowing communities to exchange goods and ideas freely so that the entire region south and east of the Jurassic Ridge came to share a broadly similar material culture maintained over three centuries. While this culture may have continued in some regions undisturbed for another century or so, in other regions the appearance of highly distinctive assemblages of decorated pottery some time around 800 BC marks the beginning of a new regionalism which was to persist throughout the rest of the millennium.

The Earliest Iron Age decorated styles in southern Britain: c. 800–600

The Earliest Iron Age, which begins in some areas as early as 800 BC, is characterized by the appearance of decorated pottery. Seven distinctive regional groups, which are believed to be broadly contemporary, can be defined. Although the coarse ware types in these assemblages recognizably derive from vessels of the LBA transitional tradition the decorated wares are an innovation without obvious local antecedents. While they may reflect nothing more than local inventiveness, some of the new forms, and quite possibly some elements of decoration, may have been inspired by imported metal types (below, p. 92).

The Early All Cannings Cross group (Figures 5.1 and A:2)

The late ninth or beginning of the eighth century saw the emergence of a highly distinctive assemblage of decorated pottery, centred on the Wessex chalklands. It was to persist in the region for several centuries, though with some typological changes.

Since most of the sites continued in use throughout this period, it is very difficult to distinguish the earliest groups except upon typological grounds, but among the earliest types must be listed the large jar with an evenly out-curved rim and a rounded shoulder and body which in most cases is decorated with incised and stamped motifs, often in the form of stab-filled geometric shapes. The second distinctive type is the bipartite bowl with beaded rim and sharp shoulder angles, between which are bands of decoration, either stamped or incised. Sometimes these vessels are decorated with a coating of haematite burnished and fired to a shiny copper colour. Other types include large tripartite jars with sharp shoulders and flared necks, as well as a variety of coarse jars.

The classic site for the occurrence of these forms is All Cannings Cross in Wiltshire, where unfortunately the earliest assemblages were not distinguished from the later material. Nevertheless, we may reasonably call the range of selected types the *Early All Cannings Cross group*. The discovery here of a tanged bifid razor and a fragment of Breton axe suggests an origin in the eighth or seventh century, but the bronzes could also have been residual material. Firmer dating evidence comes from the broadly contemporary site of Cow Down (Longbridge Deverill), Wilts., where a radiocarbon date of 840–510 Cal BC was obtained for wood charcoal collected from the post-holes of the main timbers of the earliest house. At Knights Farm, Berks., on the northwest fringe of the distribution, a typical assemblage produced two dates confirming a broad ninth- to seventh-century date bracket.

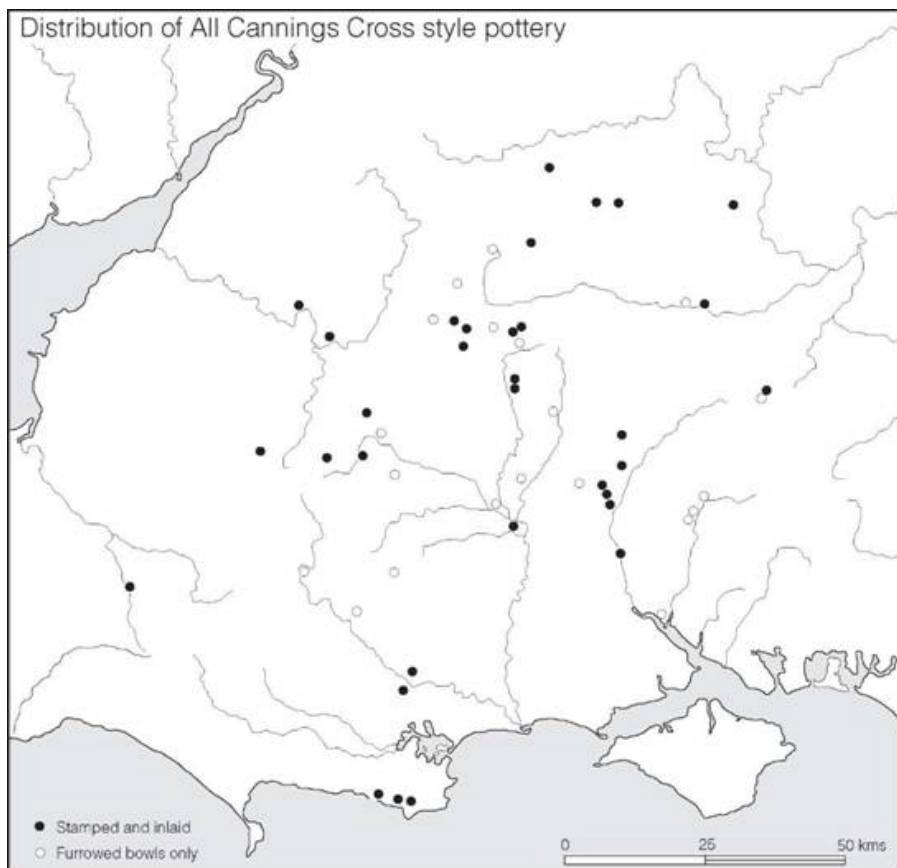


Figure 5.1 Distribution of eighth- to seventh-century pottery styles in central southern Britain (source: Cunliffe 2000).

The old type-site of All Cannings Cross has now been superseded in importance by the very extensive midden deposit found at Potterne, Wilts. and excavated with much care, resulting in the identification of fourteen chronologically successive zones for which a number of radiocarbon dates are available. Zones 14–11 produced plain pottery of the LBA transitional assemblage and are dated to 1100–850/800 while zones 10–2 produced typical All Cannings Cross decorated ware for which the date range 850/800–600 is indicated. The assemblage can be divided into two: zones 10–7, which contain the classic Early All Cannings Cross types, and zones 6–2 in which, in addition, are found long-necked bowls characteristic of the *Later All Cannings Cross* assemblage. The divide between the two broad phases is thought to date to around 700 BC. A number of bronze items were associated with the All Cannings Cross pottery, including knives, a razor, awls, chisels, pins and tweezers, all consistent with the eighth- to seventh-

century date.

The striking highly decorated pottery of the Early All Cannings Cross group has no precedent in Wessex. While some of the ceramic forms can be explained away as indigenous copies of exotic metal types, the weak profiled jars with stabbed decoration stand out as something very new that cannot be easily paralleled except among Late Urnfield assemblages in eastern France and western Germany (Sandar 1957, 225, figure 54; Hatt 1960, figure 68). Thus it is probable that an Urnfield element lies behind the origins of the Early All Cannings Cross group, but it is impossible at present to define the nature of the link more precisely. There is no firm evidence for a folk movement of any magnitude into the area, but limited infiltrations cannot be ruled out.

The continuation of intensive trading contacts during the eighth and seventh centuries introduced new types of metalwork into the country, among which were a series of fine carinated bowls (Figure 5.2), like the elegant vessel with a sharp shoulder and furrowed neck found in a hoard at Welby in Leicestershire. These vessels were immediately copied in pottery, giving rise to an extensive series of haematite-coated bowls centred on Wessex. Similarly, the tripartite jars with sharp shoulders and flaring necks may be seen to be copies of bronze containers, like the two from a seventh-century hoard found at Glentamar, Aberdeenshire. The presence in Britain of other metal vessels, similar to the bipartite bowl with median neck cordon from the Mindelheim cemetery (Kossack 1954), can also be postulated on the basis of their widely distributed ceramic copies. Thus it seems that the tendency to imitate bronze vessels, which began among the LBA transitional communities of the south and east coastal regions, continued throughout the eighth and seventh centuries in parallel with a general improvement of ceramic technology and the gradual disappearance of traditional forms like the bucket- and barrel-shaped urns. Beneath the broad similarities of parallel development lie well-defined regional differences which must be described in detail.

The Later All Cannings Cross group

Many of the ceramic elements of the early group continued into the later period, but in general the tendency was for the large decorated jars to become less common and the smaller carinated bowls with furrowed shoulders to increase in number and some of them develop long necks. Similarly, the technique of coating the vessels with haematite came into wider use. The general impression, then, is of a strong continuing local tradition, but one in which the relative proportions of the various types changed with time. The excavation at Potterne provides evidence for a stratigraphical distinction between

the early and later phases of the group. Moreover several sites would appear, on typological grounds, to have been first occupied only during the later period.

The Kimmeridge–Caburn group (Figures 5.3 and A:3)

Along the south coast of Britain a number of occupation sites can be recognized as producing a distinctive assemblage of material. The most characteristic vessels are the bipartite bowls, almost all of which have beaded rims and sharp shoulder angles, proclaiming their skeuomorphic origins. Median shoulder cordons occur widely, but furrowed and stamped decoration is restricted more to the western end of the distribution. Tripartite jars with flared rims, constricted necks and sharply angled shoulders are also a feature of this group, as are coarser-shouldered jars often with finger-tip or finger-nail impressions along the rim-tops and shoulders.

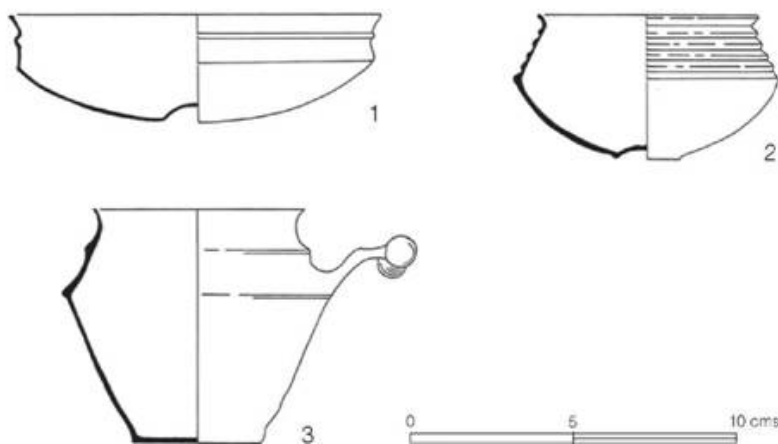


Figure 5.2 Bronze vessels serving as possible prototypes for angular pottery (sources: 1 Mindelheim, Kossack 1954; 2 Welby, Leics., Inv. Arch. GB, 24; 3 Glentanar, Aberdeenshire, Pearce 1974).

At Kimmeridge a well-stratified assemblage was recovered from an occupation site on the edge of a cliff, where Kimmeridge shale had been worked into armlets. Stratigraphically the group could be shown to succeed a layer containing pottery of Eldon's Seat I type (LBA transitional), and at Eldon's Seat it could be argued that the Kimmeridge assemblage was probably current during the hiatus between phases I and II (Cunliffe 1968b). In Dorset and Wiltshire there is a considerable degree of overlap between the All Cannings Cross and Kimmeridge traditions, but the Sussex sites show far less evidence of contact with the Wessex developments. Indeed, the

traditions of the LBA transitional style remain apparent throughout the seventh century. At sites like the Caburn and Stoke Clump the angular types occur alongside coarse vessels of devolved bucket and barrel type. While there is little direct dating evidence for the individual sites, ceramic typologies and the few stratigraphical sequences taken together point to the bracket c. 800–600 for the developments categorized here as belonging to the Kimmeridge–Caburn group.

There is no reason to suppose that the ceramic innovation arose in response to an intrusion of people; the strong native undercurrent and the evidence of skeuomorphism together suggest an indigenous population absorbing new ideas. Burial rites also continued in native style: at the Caburn, immediately outside the palisaded settlement, a cremation was found placed in a large jar and buried in a pit covered by a low barrow. Similar cremations are recorded from East Anglia.

The Highstead 2 group (Figures 5.3 and A:4)

The Highstead 2 group, named after the extensively excavated type-site in north Kent, represents a distinctive assemblage of pottery found throughout Kent and into Surrey with comparable forms appearing on the north side of the lower Thames estuary. On the basis of radiocarbon dates it is broadly dated to the ninth to seventh centuries and for this reason is frequently (and correctly) referred to as the pottery of the ‘Late Bronze/Early Iron Age tradition’ by excavators in the region. The term Highstead 2 has been adopted here to be in conformity with the nomenclature used in the rest of this chapter. Within the broader zone distinct sub-regions can be defined based on fabric petrology distinguishing between flint-tempered, shell-tempered and glauconitic sandy wares.

The forms are quite distinctive. Fine wares include small- to medium-sized bowls with one or two bands of horizontal lines combed or incised in the neck/shoulder zone. More elaborate decoration is much rarer. A range of undecorated bowls with or without an internal rim bevel is fairly frequent. The coarse wares include large sub-titulate jars, sometimes with neck cordons, together with a range of bowls of varying sizes.

The semi-submerged site of Minnis Bay off the north Kent coast has produced an assemblage of Highstead 2 type, together with a hoard of bronzes of the Carp’s-Tongue Sword Complex but not in direct association with the pottery. Among the many items represented in the hoard is a fragment of a bronze cauldron which would be consistent with a deposition date in the eighth century.

In general terms there are broad parallels with the Kimmeridge–Caburn and All Cannings Cross assemblages to the south and west and

with the Fengate–Cromer and West Harling–Staple Howe groups to the north. Together these style-zones form a broad continuum.

As with these other contemporary style-zones, it is likely that it will be possible to recognize changes occurring during the two to three centuries during which the Highstead 2 group was current, at the very least enabling us to distinguish an early and a late phase.

The West Harling–Fengate group (Figures 5.3 and A:5)

The pottery sequence of East Anglia is best exemplified by two large assemblages of pottery from settlement sites excavated at West Harling and Fengate. In earlier editions of this book they were considered to be chronologically distinct and it was argued that the West Harling style-zone preceded what was there called the Fengate–Cromer style-zone. However, in a detailed discussion of pottery from a more recent excavation at Fengate, Pryor (1974, 35–6) argued that to separate a Fengate–Cromer group was unnecessary, and subsequent discoveries have tended to support this view.

The principal forms of the West Harling–Fengate group include bipartite bowls with sharp shoulder angles and sometimes a median cordon on the neck, and larger tripartite jars, some with slashed cordons at the base of the flaring neck. Both general types are well represented in the Kimmeridge–Caburn group of the south coast. This may hint at a degree of contact through longshore maritime networks, in support of which it is worth noting the presence of large decorated jars of Early All Cannings Cross type at Minnis Bay, Kent and Darmsden, Suffolk.

The two basic forms are well represented in the assemblage from the type-site of West Harling. A typical tripartite jar decorated with plain cordons was found at Creting St Mary, Suffolk, used as a cremation urn buried apparently without a covering barrow.

Another large assemblage recovered during development work at Fengate also included bowls with flaring rims and somewhat globular bodies, often decorated with shallow tooling above or below the shoulder or girth. In a detailed typological discussion (Hawkes and Fell 1945) a chronological sequence was proposed placing these bowls early in the sequence, but it no longer seems valid in the light of an assemblage found in a controlled excavation at Vicarage Farm, Fengate, where decorated bowl types were found together with a vessel with a foot-ring base similar to Darmsden–Linton types. This might suggest that the Fengate bowls were late in the sequence and the type extended into the subsequent period. However, the excavation of a well at the Essex site of Lofts Farm showed the typical West Harling–Fengate assemblage to pre-date stratigraphically a large group of Darmsden–Linton types.

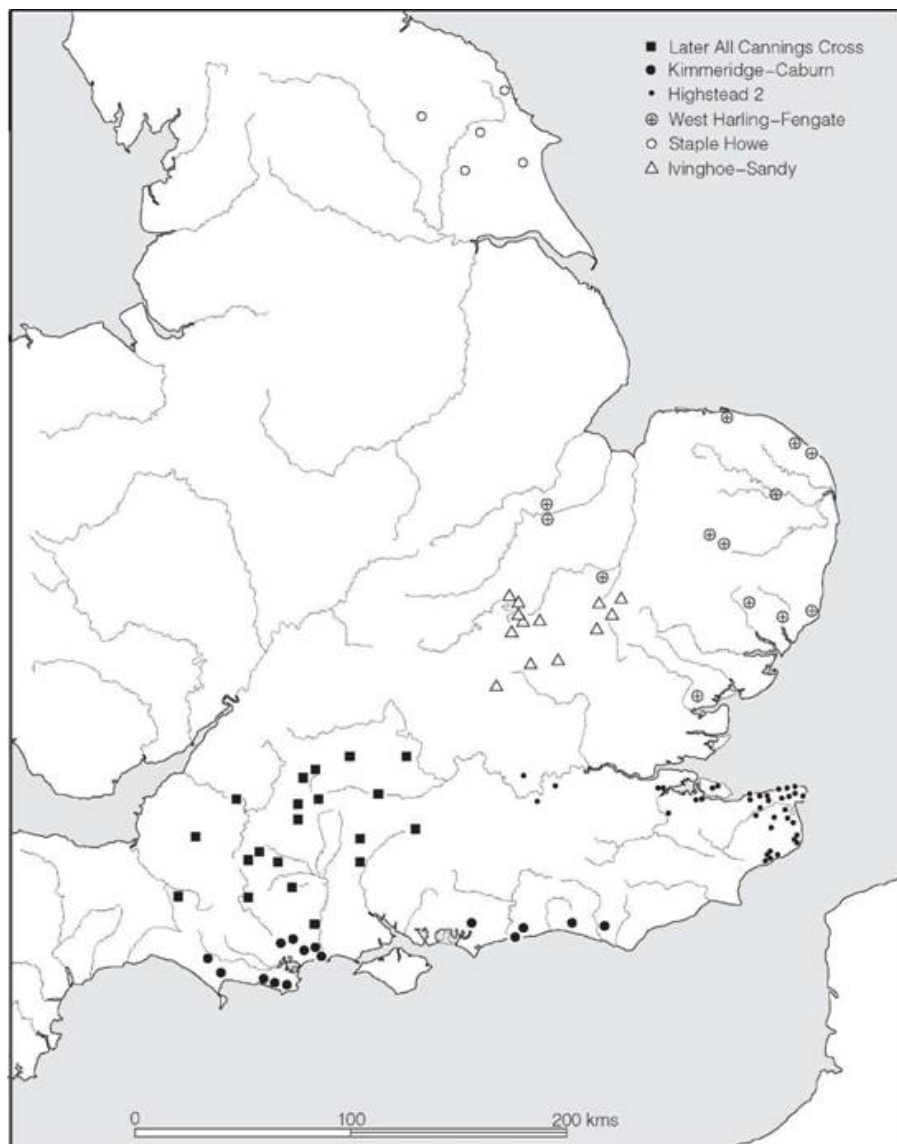


Figure 5.3 *Distribution of eighth- to seventh-century pottery styles (source: author).*

The simplest way to view this apparently conflicting evidence is to suggest that the West Harling–Fengate style spanned a period of time from the eighth/seventh to the fifth centuries, the large decorated Fengate bowls developing late in the sequence. Radiocarbon dates are at present unhelpful and associated datable artefacts are few, but a sunflower swan’s-neck pin found with the Fengate pots can be broadly dated to the sixth to third centuries (Spratling 1974).

The Staple Howe group (Figures 5.3 and A:6)

A small group of pottery from Yorkshire, best exemplified by an assemblage from the hill-top settlement at Staple Howe, has much in common with the Kimmeridge–Caburn and West Harling–Fengate groups, producing the same range of sharp-shouldered bipartite bowls together with coarse wares deriving from earlier traditions.

Dating evidence is provided at Staple Howe by a group of loosely associated bronze objects, including three Hallstatt C razors, a tanged chisel, part of a socketed axe and a small fragment of harness mount, the latter like those found at Llyn Fawr and Court-St-Etienne in seventh-century contexts. A single radiocarbon date of 660–390 Cal BC from the site, suggesting a seventh- to sixth-century BC date, is in keeping with the character of the metalwork and pottery. The metal finds from Scarborough are not closely associated with the pottery but it seems reasonable to suppose them to be broadly contemporary. They include a tanged chisel like that from Staple Howe, a socketed axe, a flat-headed pin and two harness-rings – all paralleled in the Heathery Burn deposit, Co. Durham – which together suggest a date early in the sixth century or late in the seventh.

It now seems probable that the vessels found at the hillfort of Grimthorpe, which include jars with flared rims, shouldered jars and bowls, and simple hemispherical bowls, should be regarded as belonging to an early phase in the Staple Howe tradition. The two radiocarbon dates for bones found in the ditch, 940–760 and 1320–1000 Cal BC, seemed surprisingly early to the excavator, but when the similarities between the Grimthorpe pottery and the vessels of the LBA transitional tradition are considered, a date in the ninth or eighth century would seem acceptable. Some further support is provided by a group of similar pottery from within and below a group of nine barrows on Ampleforth Moor, Yorks., which is also comparable to the sherds from the Heathery Burn Cave. Two radiocarbon dates were obtained, 664–518 and 696–538, indicating a date probably in the seventh century.

It may eventually be necessary to divide the Staple Howe group into an early and later phase: the early phase of LBA transitional origin dating to the eighth century or earlier, including Ampleforth Moor, early Scarborough and Grimthorpe, and the later phase of seventh-century date being represented by the angular bipartite wares of the type-site. The large assemblage of pottery recovered from the open settlement at Hesterton on the north edge of the Yorkshire Wolds, and broadly similar to the Staple Howe and Scarborough material, will eventually allow a far finer definition of the ceramic traditions of the period from the ninth to fifth centuries in Yorkshire.

Ivinghoe–Sandy group (Figures 5.3 and A:7)

The excavation of the hillfort on Ivinghoe Beacon has brought to light a distinctive assemblage of pottery found in loose association both with the structure of the fort and with a group of bronze implements. A number of isolated groups of broadly contemporary material are known from sites such as Sandy, Harrold, Kempston, Puddlehill and Totternhoe – all in Bedfordshire – Hawthorn Hill, Herts., and several others, many of them unpublished; but apart from the material from Sandy, the finds were unassociated and mainly recovered under non- archaeological conditions.

The Ivinghoe pottery is generally coarsely made. The principal types include the shouldered bowl or jar with the rim-top out-curved and the shoulder sometimes ornamented with finger- impressions, jars with applied neck cordons impressed with finger-printing, round-shouldered jars with flared rims, open hemispherical bowls and occasional bipartite bowls and jars, one of which has incised decoration on the shoulder. The same range of types recurs on the other sites mentioned, but the bipartite bowl with rounded shoulder tends to be rather more common. There are obvious similarities between this group and the pottery from Scarborough, Minnis Bay, the Caburn, etc., the only significant difference lying in the general lack of the tightly moulded and cordoned vessels imitating bronze types. The impression which the pottery gives, therefore, is of a contemporary native tradition largely untouched by external influences.

Exactly the same conclusions can be reached from a study of the associated bronzework, which at Ivinghoe includes a tanged bifid razor, fragments of two swords probably of Ewart Park type, a ring, various mounts and studs, tweezers and several pins. To these may be added the winged axe found unassociated in 1929. All the bronzework falls within the native Late Bronze Age tradition of the eighth and seventh centuries, uninfluenced by obvious Hallstatt C techniques. On a conservative estimate, a date of about 700 BC might be suggested for the initial occupation of the site. Within this same general range of pottery can be placed the vessels recovered from the Totternhoe quarry, Beds., found together with a bronze vase-headed pin of Late Urnfield type. A similar pin was recovered from All Cannings Cross and an iron copy is known from Fifield Bavant, Wilts. The bronze examples cannot be dated too closely, since individual pins might have survived in use for some time, but an eighth- to sixth-century range would seem most likely.

Thus the evidence at present available suggests the existence of a regional group centred upon the Chilterns and the gravel terraces to the west, defined by pottery made in the traditional manner and by

the continued use of Late Bronze Age metalwork. Exact dating is impossible, but the range 800–600 probably covers the main developments which the pottery style characterizes.

The Early Iron Age styles of southern Britain (c. 600–400/300 BC) (Figure 5.4)

During the sixth century it is possible to recognize a number of distinctive local ceramic assemblages crystallizing from the more widely distributed groups of the earlier period. The distinction between fine and coarse wares is now more clear cut and the fine wares show a high technical competence which in some cases suggests the emergence of specialist production centres. In both form and decoration the fine wares of one style-zone are clearly distinguishable from those of the next.

In the south-east of Britain, towards the beginning of this period and certainly during the fifth century, the ceramic assemblages show strong influences from the adjacent Continent from northern France and the Low Countries. This is most vividly demonstrated by the decorated and painted wares of the Highstead–Dollands Moor group. More widely adopted was the Continental preference for well-made angular bowls and jars with pedestal bases. The British examples have close similarities with the *vases carenées* and *vases piriformes* of the Continental La Tène cultures. The influence of these ceramic innovations was felt most strongly in the Thames valley and eastern England, contributing to the regional assemblages called here the Long Wittenham–Allen's Pit group, the Chinnor–Wandlebury group, the Highstead–Dollands Moor group and the Darmsden–Linton group. Further south in Sussex and west in Hampshire and Wiltshire, elements of the new types, though apparent, are more dimly reflected in contemporary ceramic developments. It was during this period that painted wares appeared in east Kent comparable in style and technique to vessels of Late Hallstatt to Early La Tène date found in northern Gaul.

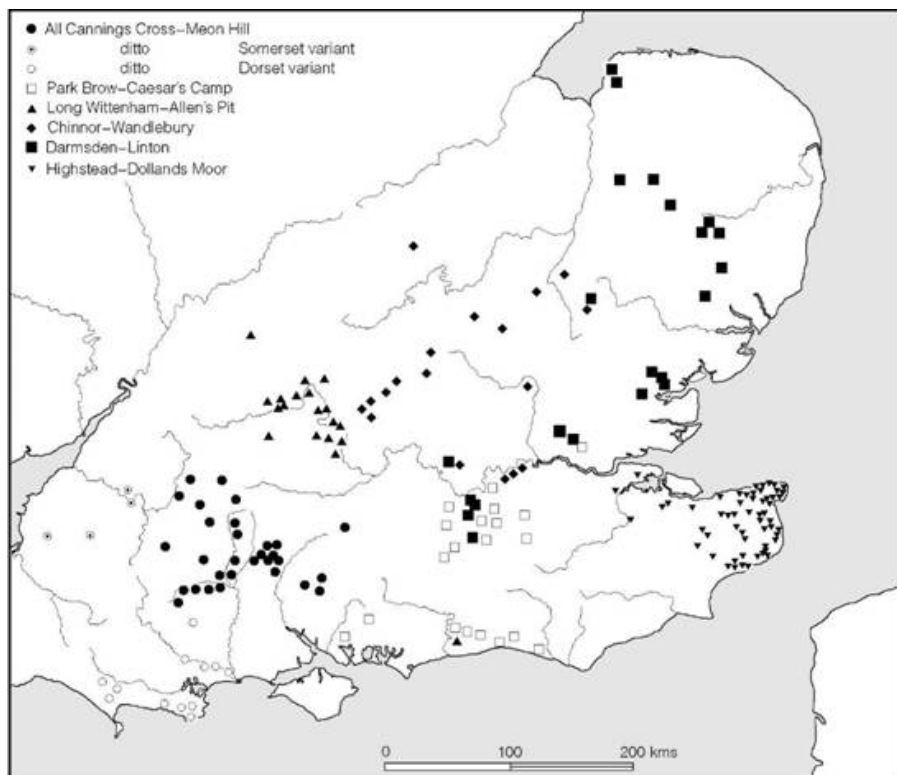


Figure 5.4 *Distribution of sixth- and fourth-century pottery styles (source: author).*

The mechanism by which these Continental styles were introduced into Britain remains unclear. While it is possible that limited folk movements took place bringing new peoples to Kent and the Thames valley region it is no less likely that the new ceramic styles emerged as the result of intensifying exchange relations between the two sides of the Channel.

In central southern Britain, from Somerset to Sussex, a series of distinctive styles developed, far less influenced by Continental styles. The more technically advanced forms are found in the central Wessex area, with related variants in Somerset and Dorset. In Sussex and Surrey the assemblage comprises a rather more generalized range of forms.

The All Cannings Cross–Meon Hill group (Figures 5.4 and A:8)

The All Cannings Cross settlement continued in use for several hundred years following the initial occupation of the site in the eighth century. No stratigraphical distinction was made by the excavator between the early and late phases, but the later pottery can be

distinguished on typological grounds and can be shown to be the same as that found at the Hampshire site of Meon Hill, where occupation did not begin until the late phase. At the comprehensively excavated settlement of Cow Down (Longbridge Deverill), Wilts., a stratigraphical distinction has been recognized between earlier All Cannings Cross pottery and the later All Cannings Cross–Meon Hill group. The latter assemblage can therefore be regarded as distinct from and succeeding the earlier group.

There is a degree of continuity between the two assemblages. In particular, the haematite coating of bowls continued on an extensive scale, but the bipartite form gave way to shouldered bowls with widely flaring rims. The commonest of these was still ornamented with furrowed shoulders, as in the earlier tradition, but other forms of shoulder decoration were adopted, including groups or areas of diagonal lines and stroke-filled triangles, the decoration now being applied by shallow tooling with a blunt point before firing and not by incision or stamping. At a later stage a highly characteristic form of haematite-coated bowl was produced in central Wessex, with the angles of the body accentuated by cordons, between which various forms of geometric decoration were scratched on to the surface after firing: these were filled with white paste. Unlike the other bowl types, these scratched cordoned bowls were provided with a carefully moulded foot-ring to enable them to stand firmly. There can be little doubt that vessels of this type were made in a single, or a limited number of production centres and distributed locally from there. Fabric analysis has shown that the prime (and possibly sole) source was a brickearth deposit found in the vicinity of Salisbury. Radiocarbon dates from Danebury suggest that assemblages (here called ceramic phase 3) containing scratched cordoned bowls without other types of haematite-coated bowls were current from the fifth to the early fourth centuries. In addition to the decorated bowls, several plain types with variously moulded profiles commonly occur but always with a haematite-coated surface.

The coarse ware types are restricted to plain-shouldered jars, seldom with any form of decoration on the shoulder or rim. Occasionally jars with horizontally or vertically perforated handles are found, and at a late stage plain bucket-shaped types come into more common use. A more exotic type, found twice at Swallowcliffe Down, Wilts., and also at Danebury, consisted of a high-shouldered jar with flaring rim and a narrow squat pedestal foot, made in a black fabric with a well-burnished surface. Since parallels with Continental La Tène types are fairly close, it is possible that the Swallowcliffe vessels are local copies of imported types.

The distribution of the principal types centres upon the Wessex

chalkland extending from the Marlborough Downs in the north to the River Itchen in the east.

In south Dorset, south of the Stour, a more restricted range of types occurs, typified by the flared bowl and bipartite bowls with near-vertical concave sides (Figure A:9). The assemblage is clearly within the broad tradition of the Wessex haematite-coated bowls, but distributionally lies outside the range of the centres producing the more characteristic decorated types. A westerly extension of the generalized assemblage can also be recognized at the Somerset sites of Bathampton Down, Pagan's Hill, Banwell and South Cadbury (Figure A:9). Like the south Dorset ceramics, there is some divergence from the typical central Wessex groups, but similarities in form and the use of haematite coating serve to link the two traditions closely.

Some indication of the date range covered by the assemblage is provided by a few stratified metal objects. From Maiden Castle comes a Viollier type Ia fibula dating to the second half of the fifth century, which may have arrived just before 400 BC. The latest datable metal objects from All Cannings Cross are two local versions of the La Tène II fibulae of a type in use in the fourth century, and the Meon Hill settlement has produced an iron La Tène II fibula of fourth-century origin, but these associations are not reliable and both sites have produced some pottery of later type. The fifth-century date indicated by the radiocarbon assessments from Danebury provides a fixed point for the scratched cordoned bowls. This admittedly sparse evidence, taken in conjunction with typological considerations and sequence, suggests that the All Cannings Cross–Meon Hill group, together with its south Dorset and Somerset outliers, developed out of the late All Cannings Cross and Kimmeridge–Caburn groups in the sixth century, and may have continued in use into the fourth century. Throughout this time there was, of course, internal development: the flared furrowed bowls were gradually replaced by the scratched cordoned bowls in the central areas and the coarse ware vessels lost their sharp-shouldered profiles, developing towards simpler barrel-shaped containers by the end of the period, when there was also a noticeable preference for darker fired fabrics.

Other aspects of material culture, economy and settlement pattern are shared with the rest of south-eastern Britain, emphasizing the cultural unity of the area. The only other distinctive Wessex artefacts are the local copies of the La Tène I fibulae with their bows decorated by a simple row of punched dots. More than twenty have now been found, all from the central Wessex area (Figures 18.13, p. 502 and 18.14, p. 503). Clearly this was a local product made for a market of restricted size. Like the pottery, the fibulae serve to emphasize a sphere of contact, implying that the Wessex sites were linked by well-

developed exchange mechanisms.

The Park Brow–Caesar’s Camp group (Figures 5.4 and A:10)

The south-east of Britain, particularly the chalk areas of the North and South Downs, is scattered with settlement sites, most of them ill-recorded but producing similar assemblages of pottery. The range of types is not wide but consistently includes bowls with well-defined shoulders and flaring rims, usually made in dark well-burnished fabrics. The coarse ware vessels consist of jars with rounded shoulders, upright or flaring necks and flattened rim-tops. Finger-impressions on the rims and shoulders sometimes occur, and occasionally jars and bowls are provided with squat pedestal bases. Well-stratified groups have been found at Chalton (site 50), Hants.

The type-sites chosen to define the group were not extensively excavated but at the open settlement at Park Brow, Sussex, a bent silver ring of Viollier type Ic was discovered, which is hardly likely to have reached Britain before 270; while at Caesar’s Camp (Wimbledon), Surrey, an assemblage of pottery was found associated with the rampart of a timber-laced hillfort. Dating and internal development are difficult to assess in any detail, but on typological grounds it is probable that the finger-impressed coarse ware, which occurs in quantity at Caesar’s Camp, is earlier than the plainer forms from Park Brow. The development would appear to be largely parallel with that of the All Cannings Cross–Meon Hill group in Wessex and probably covers the same time span, from the sixth to the fourth centuries.

The south-west of Britain

The early pottery of the south-west is at present sparse and ill-known and is without reliable dating evidence. Pottery generally similar to the type in use in southern and eastern Britain from the eighth to fifth centuries has been found in small quantities at several sites including Norton Fitzwarren and Worlebury, Somerset, Dainton and Mount Batten, Devon, and Bodrifty, Cornwall. The settlement at Keston, Devon, may also belong to this early group but the assemblage is not sufficiently distinctive. No internal dating evidence is forthcoming from these sites but comparison with the pottery of the Kimmeridge–Caburn group suggests a broad contemporaneity. What the scarcity of early pottery implies – a sparse population, a largely aceramic culture or a continuation of Bronze Age forms – it is at present impossible to say.

The Long Wittenham–Allen’s Pit group (Figures 5.4 and A:11)

In the Upper Thames valley and extending into the Cotswolds are a

number of sites which have produced varied but distinctive assemblages of pottery (illustrated in detail in Harding 1972). The principal types include bowls with well-defined shoulders and flaring rims, fired usually to dark tones and well finished by smoothing or burnishing. The shoulders of these vessels were frequently decorated with shallow-tooled decoration in a variety of patterns resembling the contemporary Wessex examples; but, with the exception of occasional haematite-coated sherds which may be imported into the region, the decorated bowls are distinctive enough to be regarded as locally made. There are three major coarse ware types: weak-shouldered jars sometimes with finger- impressions on the shoulders, open bowls with heavy T-shaped rims, finger-impressed on the outside, and large-shouldered jars with sharply flaring rims closely related to the tripartite jars of the Early All Cannings Cross group. These are usually plain but occasionally the shoulders are tooled with simple geometric decoration.

Although good stratigraphical evidence is lacking from practically every site, it seems that the tripartite jars and some of the plainer, less flared bowls belonging to the beginning of the sequence overlap with the Early All Cannings Cross and Kimmeridge–Caburn groups; then follows the development of the highly decorated bowls in parallel with the Wessex, All Cannings Cross–Meon Hill group. Towards the end of the period the bowl form becomes simpler in profile and less frequently decorated, while the coarser vessels take on a slacker and more barrel-shaped form. The picture is to some extent confused by regionalization and by the differential distribution of the more elaborate types. Thus further from the Thames, in the eastern flanks of the Cotswolds, very few of the bowls are found and the coarse wares are of a very generalized form.

Internal dating evidence is lacking apart from a La Tène I fibula from Radley, Oxon., but analogies with Wessex might suggest a beginning in the sixth century and a development continuing as late as the fourth century. Well-stratified groups are required before subdivision or more precise dating is possible.

The Chinnor–Wandlebury group (Figures 5.4 and A:12)

The area occupied by this group approximates to that of the Chilterns, but extends in the north up to the Fen margins and in the south to the Thames valley and the Berkshire Downs. The pottery by which the group is characterized consists of bowls with flaring rims and shoulders frequently decorated with simple geometric patterns, often dot-filled triangles. At Blewburton Hill, Oxon., and Chinnor, Oxon., rosette lamps were sometimes employed, the rosettes being arranged between pendent swags at Blewburton Hill; this mode of

decoration is strictly limited in distribution. More common and more widely spread were the flared bowls, the lip splaying beyond the maximum diameter of the shoulder. These were invariably made in a black burnished fabric and were sometimes ornamented with a zigzag pattern scratched after firing. This type of bowl was often provided with a simple foot-ring base, a technique apparently learnt from the East Anglian group to be described below. The coarse ware jars were of normal shouldered type, sometimes with finger-impressions on the rim-tops and shoulders. Several stratified groups have been recovered from Puddlehill, Beds., where the excavator distinguishes two chronological groups (Matthews 1976, figures 96–8).

Both of the type-sites also provide evidence of internal development. At Chinnor two phases of occupation were recognized. The first yielded a large number of bowls, mostly decorated with simple linear zigzag motifs or groups of lines, although some were ornamented with pendent stab-filled triangles frequently in association with stab-filled arcs, possibly imitating handles. The second phase, stratigraphically distinct from the first, included bowls in a brownish ware stamped with rosettes. In all probability, different production centres are indicated. At the hillfort of Wandlebury, Cambs., it was possible to relate a pottery sequence to two separate phases of the fort construction. The earlier group contained the basic forms defined above but the later assemblage was more generalized, exhibiting few distinctive features but sufficiently similar to the first group to suggest a logical development from it. Clearly, over such a large area, factors such as local development in isolation, as well as specialized production offering geographically limited distribution, tend to complicate the apparent unity of the region. A further possibility that cannot be ruled out is that some sites like Wandlebury may have continued to be inhabited as late as the first century, while the communities further south came under the influence of more advanced pottery traditions.

Dating with precision is impossible. Similarities to Wessex, the Upper Thames and East Anglia suggest a broad contemporaneity which may have spanned the two or three centuries following 600, but no internal evidence is yet available.

The Darmsden–Linton group (Figures 5.4 and A:13)

The east of England from the Wash as far south as the Thames supported a group of settlements linked by a common ceramic tradition typified by a large assemblage of pottery found at Darmsden in Suffolk. The most characteristic type of vessel is the bowl in a fine black burnished ware with a sharp narrow shoulder and a short upright or slightly flared rim. The shoulders are usually ornamented

with deeply impressed horizontal grooves, while the bases may be rounded or provided with simple foot-rings. Similar bowls with more rounded shoulders also occur, together with larger bowls with widely flared rims. The jar forms are usually shouldered and frequently, but not invariably, decorated.

Some of the bowls have low pedestal bases comparable to La Tène I types on the Continent, suggesting that the Darmsden–Linton style may have continued into the fifth or fourth century. When it began is less clear but at Lofts Farm, Essex, a radiocarbon date of 905–805 Cal BC was obtained. Other early dates from Rook Hill, Essex, and Barham, Suffolk, would be consistent with a beginning in the eighth century. On present evidence the date bracket of the eighth to the fourth centuries would seem to be indicated, with the jars with pedestal bases appearing at the end of the sequence.

Links with other groups are demonstrated at several sites. At Sandown Park (Esher), Surrey, Darmsden–Linton pottery is found together with types of Park Brow–Caesar’s Camp forms and at Linton, Cambs., associations with Chinnor–Wandlebury wares are recorded. A broad contemporaneity is therefore implied.

The Highstead–Dollands Moor group (Figures 5.4 and A:14)

Recent work in Kent has brought to light a highly distinctive assemblage of pottery, both the coarse wares and the fine wares having close parallels with Continental vessels of the Late Hallstatt and Early La Tène period. Forms vary but include shouldered bowls with shallow bodies and upright or flaring rims, tripartite jars with sharp shoulder and neck angles and flaring rims, and onion-shaped jars often with pedestal bases. Surface treatment includes plain red-finished ware or polychrome decoration comprising bands of red paint lined with white and overpainted with triangles, squares or squares containing crossed diagonals. Less frequent are white-painted motifs on self-coloured bodies. Some vessels were decorated with incised designs, invariably rectilinear, including combed zigzags and, more common, square panels with crossing diagonals.

The associated coarse wares include shouldered bowls or jars, bowls with evenly rounded body and simple incurving rim and, less frequently, straight-walled flaring bowls or basins. Many are deliberately rusticated below the shoulder with an applied slurry of granular clay. The forms and the rustication (*ecclaboussée*) are closely similar to assemblages found in Belgium and the Netherlands dating to the sixth and fifth centuries.

The tight-knit distribution of this highly distinctive assemblage, restricted largely to Kent east of the Medway, and the close similarities of both its fine and coarse wares to types found on the

adjacent Continent argue for intensive interaction between the communities on either side of the Straits of Dover. That the maritime networks encouraged the flow of ideas and values between neighbouring communities need occasion no surprise. While this will, of course, have involved the actual movement of people there is nothing to suggest the arrival of immigrant populations. The new styles of decoration were selectively adopted by local communities and the vessels were locally made. At Eastbourne, an outlier from the main distribution, onion-shaped urns with painted geometric decoration appear to be wasters from a clamp-fired manufactory.

In Kent a number of sites have produced significant assemblages. Of these the two type-sites are the most important. At Highstead it is possible to trace the development of the style in a series of stratified deposits from c. 600 to c. 350 with a floruit c. 550–400. A finer chronology based on changes in decorative treatment will, no doubt, soon be possible.

The Middle to Late Iron Age style of southern Britain (400/300–50 +)

During the Middle Iron Age most regions of southern Britain developed their own distinctive styles of decorated pottery. These may be divided into four broad regional continua: a central southern group dominated by the saucepan pot form; a south-western group of highly decorated necked jars; a Midlands group of decorated bowls; and an eastern group in which the decorated bulbous jar form predominates. Each continuum can be further divided into a number of different styles. To some extent these broad regional divides reflect patterns already present in the Early Iron Age or even earlier. It will be argued later ([chapter 21](#)) that the four regions now represent real cultural (and tribal?) divisions which are also distinguishable in terms of settlement pattern and economy.

Petrographical studies of Middle Iron Age pottery (Peacock 1969, 1979; Morris 1981) have demonstrated clearly that in some regions, especially the south-west and the Welsh borderlands, a very limited range of clays was used and that the products were distributed over considerable distances, suggesting a degree of specialist activity. In the west Midlands and Welsh borderlands the distributions lie within a discrete territory, but some of the products of the south-western production centres spread far into adjacent territories, implying a system of long-distance exchange. It should be possible in the not too distant future to examine the nature of the boundaries between regions or style-zones in order to test the degree of intercourse between adjacent territories, but this will depend upon the availability of large and adequately published ceramic assemblages.

The saucepan pot continuum of the centre south (Figures 5.5 and A:15–18)

During the fourth to second centuries BC, the pottery over a large area of southern Britain developed a remarkable degree of uniformity characterized by vertical-sided ‘saucepan pots’ and jars with rounded shoulders and beaded rims. Broadly speaking this continuum covers Sussex, Hampshire, Wiltshire, Surrey, Berkshire, Somerset, Gloucestershire, the Welsh borderlands and parts of south Wales (Cunliffe 1984a, 254–8; Morris 1981). The only differences which can be recognized in the ceramic assemblages of these regions are minor variations of profile, regional decorative preferences and fabric variation. The Dorset group, however, varies more significantly and is something of an anomaly. Where it is possible to establish a stratigraphy within this zone, it would appear that in the earliest period decoration was rare or absent but the vessel forms are much the same throughout.

To describe in any detail the range of pottery from each of the regional styles constituting the saucepan pot continuum is unnecessary here, since the illustrations of selected vessels together with the distribution map summarize in a simple visual form the major points. Nevertheless, a few generalizations must be offered.

The Caburn–Cissbury style (Figure A:15) This has been so called after two partially excavated hillforts in Sussex. The main characteristic of the pottery is that it tends to be decorated with simple regular and asymmetrical curvilinear designs. The rims and bases of the ‘saucepans’ are frequently thickened, perhaps to imitate the strengthening of leather prototypes of which the vessels may be copies. A few sites in Surrey producing a broadly similar range of types are best included in this grouping though they are separated on Figure 5.5.

The St Catharine’s Hill–Worthy Down style (Figure A:16) Centred upon Hampshire, this also shows signs of skeuomorphism in the frequent use of a decorative zone, incorporating oblique lines between rows of dots, presumably meant to imitate stitching. The group is also characterized by a greater predominance of jars, often similarly decorated, some of which are large while others have about the same capacity as the saucepan pots. A study of stratified groups from Torberry, Sussex, and Chalton, Hants, has suggested that chronological differences may be recognized, the later groups containing a greater number of small jars (Cunliffe 1976a). At Danebury, Hants, where a considerable assemblage of pottery has been recovered, it was possible to show that a phase in which decoration was popular was preceded by an undecorated phase, and

here the classic St Catharine's Hill–Worthy Down assemblage, always made in a fine flint-grit tempered fabric, was preceded by vessels of the Yarnbury–Highfield style.

The Yarnbury–Highfield style (Figure A:17) This Wiltshire style differs from the Hampshire group in that narrow-necked jars frequently occur as well as open dishes, and the decorative motifs often incorporate simple tooled arcs springing from shallow depressions. For the most part the vessels of this style were made in a distinctive sandy fabric containing the mineral glauconite derived from clays found to the west of Salisbury.

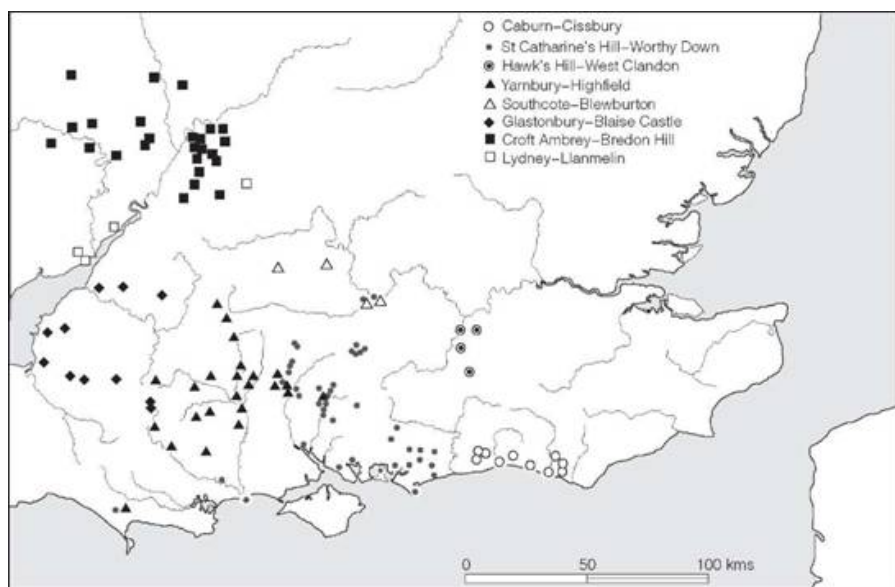


Figure 5.5 Simplified distribution of fourth- to second-century pottery styles in central southern Britain (source: author).

The Hawk's Hill–West Clandon style (Figure A:18)

This is proposed to include the limited assemblages recovered from a relatively few sites in Surrey. Similarities to the Sussex saucepan pot types are apparent.

The Southcote–Blewburton Hill style (Figure A:18) This is distributed in the Berkshire Downs–Reading area. The basic pottery forms show considerable variation, reflecting influences both from the decorated hemispherical bowl types of the Upper Thames and from Hampshire. The general preference in decoration is for rectilinear areas filled with shallow tooled lines or dots.

The Croft Ambrey–Bredon Hill style (Figure A:19) This is represented

in the Herefordshire– Cotswold region by occupation sites and hillforts producing pottery in the saucepan pot tradition which is decorated either with bands of stamped impressions below the rim or with a similarly placed zone of linear tooling. It was originally thought that the two styles represented different cultural groups of complementary dates, but the excavation at Croft Ambrey, together with a petrological examination of the fabrics (Peacock 1968), has demonstrated that both types were contemporary and were the output of three production centres in the Malvern area, which developed to serve the needs of a region hitherto largely aceramic. The complexities of production and distribution which the study underlines are probably typical of those which existed over much of southern Britain at this time and were examined in detail by Morris (1981).

The Lydney–Llanmelin style (Figure A:19) This is centred upon the south Welsh coastal plain east of the Usk, where a group of sites producing a distinctive saucepan pot assemblage have been excavated. Salmonsbury, Glos., has yielded pottery of a broadly similar kind. The range of decorative motifs is limited but includes chevron patterns and large oval-shaped stab marks which tend not to occur in other groups. The few sites and lack of good stratigraphical sequences, however, prevent an adequate definition of this style at present (Spencer 1983).

The Glastonbury–Blaise Castle Hill style (Figure A:20) It is a moot point whether the Middle Iron Age assemblages of Somerset and Avon should be included with the saucepan pot continuum or one of the south-western groups characterized by the presence of necked jars and of distinctive curvilinear decoration. That many of the assemblages show a distinct resemblance to the saucepan pot styles further to the east is evident. At Little Solisbury excavation has yielded a unique assemblage of decorated vessels which may lie towards the beginning of a sequence, and another group of material was found at Blaise Castle Hill, Glos., in a pit together with a La Tène I fibula allowing the possibility of an early date. Other saucepan pot assemblages, from Camerton and Worlebury, Somerset, and from Bury Wood Camp, Wilts., are limited in quantity and without useful associations.

From the Mendips and to the south the quantity of decorated south-western pottery ('Glastonbury wares') increases and certainly dominates the publications, though we should remember that at the two villages of Meare only 5–10 per cent of the total assemblage showed any form of decoration. Radiocarbon dates available from Meare villages East and West suggest occupation starting as early as the third century BC (Coles 1987, 246–9), by which date decorated wares were well in evidence. What is not yet clear is the chronology of the decorated forms. If the simpler forms, jars and saucepan pots with geometric and simple curvilinear designs, come early in the sequence

and the more elaborate forms – the neck bowls and jars and the open hemispherical bowls – with complex stamped and curvilinear motifs are later, then it could be argued that a traditional saucepan pot style-zone of the Middle Iron Age preceded but developed into a more complex and artistically evolved assemblage of Late Iron Age date under influences emanating from the south-west. That the villages of Meare and Glastonbury continued to be occupied into the first century AD is well established and adds some support to this view. It is, however, equally possible that the ‘south-western’ influences appeared early and dominated the assemblage throughout the Middle and Late Iron Age. These problems will only be resolved after a series of well-stratified assemblages have been studied.

Dating evidence for the Middle Iron Age saucepan pot assemblages rests largely with the Danebury sequence where a large body of well-stratified material has been studied and subjected to a programme of radiocarbon dating (Cunliffe and Orton 1984; Buck and Litton 1995; Cunliffe 1995, 13–18). The earliest groups of undecorated saucepan pots which include glau-conitic wares from Wiltshire date to the end of the fourth century BC, the decorated forms becoming common in the third and second centuries. At Hengistbury Head the latest saucepans are found in association with Dressel 1A amphorae suggesting an end date c. 100 BC or soon after. Other scraps of dating evidence include the La Tène I fibula from Blaise Castle Hill and a coin of Ptolemy V (204–180) from Winchester: neither provides close dating in its own right but both are consistent with the range suggested by the radiocarbon dates at Danebury.

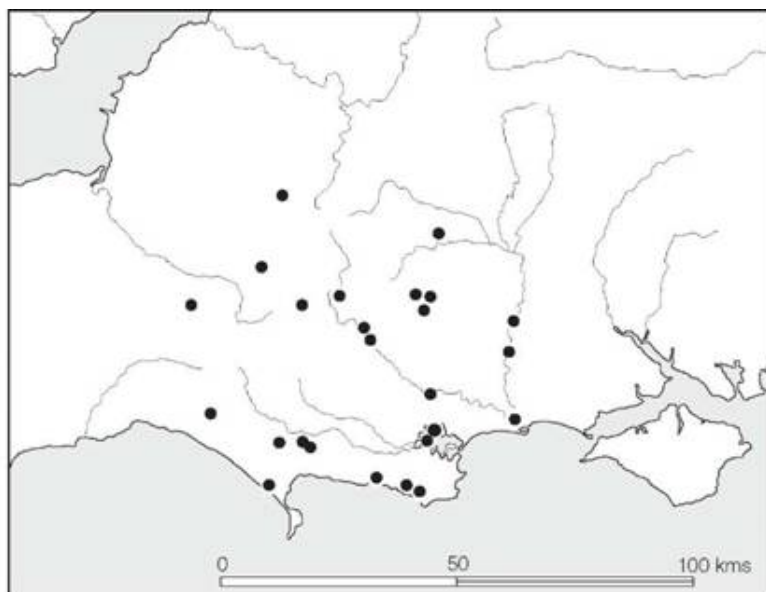


Figure 5.6 *Distribution of Maiden Castle–Marnhull style pottery (source: author).*

The end of the saucepan pot styles is likely to have varied from region to region. Over much of central southern Britain the change will have come with the introduction of the potter's wheel some time around 100 BC. In Somerset the essentially Middle Iron Age traditions appear to have continued little changed until the Roman Conquest, while in Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Shropshire and south Wales the local styles may have continued in use even later, until these areas were gradually subdued by the Roman army between AD 47 and c. AD 60.

The Maiden Castle–Marnhull style (Figures 5.6 and A:21) From the lower reaches of the Wiltshire Avon west approximately to the valley of the River Brit and from the Channel coast to the River Ebbles, a range of pottery is found typified by the large and well-stratified collection from the hillfort of Maiden Castle and from the open settlement at Marnhull. The forms and decoration readily distinguish the style from the adjacent saucepan pot groups. The commonest types are large ovoid jars with beaded rims and smaller bowls of similar shape. Some jars were provided with countersunk lugs, and occasionally open bowls with flat-topped rims occur. Decoration often takes the form of grooved scrolls, arcs or wavy lines. Sometimes single or grouped dimples are employed, either associated with other patterns or in isolation; less often, shallow- tooled arcs occur. A consideration of the sequences and associations from the two type-sites leaves little doubt that the entire assemblage could easily have developed out of preceding ceramic forms. Even the countersunk lugs, which were once thought to have derived from Brittany, are now best regarded as a local feature.

At what stage pottery of the Maiden Castle–Marnhull type began to develop its distinctive characteristics is difficult to say, but a beginning in the fourth or third century would allow a sufficient time span for the associated structural developments at Maiden Castle to take place and is consistent with the available radiocarbon dates. The end of the sequence was marked by the rapid evolution of better-made and more sophisticated pottery of Durotrigan type which resulted from the introduction of the potter's wheel and resumed contacts with the Continent towards the beginning of the first century BC.

South-Western Decorated Wares (Figures 5.7 and A:22–23)

It has long been recognized that in the later pre-Roman Iron Age the communities of south-west England used a range of ceramics among which were distinctive and highly decorated necked- bowl and jar

forms. These were called *Glastonbury ware* after the Somerset lake village – a term which is no longer favoured because of the potential misunderstanding which it can cause. Instead, the less specific term *South-Western Decorated Wares* is preferred, and until more work is undertaken on regional stylistic variations it will serve usefully as a portmanteau category.

A petrological study of the fabrics of selected types (Peacock 1969 and below pp. 504–6) has distinguished six regional groups, each of which was based on a different parent rock ranging from the gabbro of the Lizard Peninsula to the carboniferous limestone of the Mendips (Figure 18.17, p. 507). Clearly a number of different production centres must have been in operation, but not all were necessarily contemporary.

The origins and development of the style are extremely difficult to untangle in the absence of well-stratified sequences, but the publication of the pottery from Carn Euny provides a useful yardstick (Elsdon 1978). The earliest decorated sherds were ornamented with stamped designs highly reminiscent of Breton motifs considered on stylistic grounds to be of fifth-century date (Schwappach 1969, 272). A single radiocarbon date of 524–388 Cal BC for the Carn Euny sherds would be consistent with this dating. Later, probably in the third century BC, rouletted decoration becomes evident, to be followed by a range of curvilinear and geometric designs incised with a shallow tool on the leather-hard fabric. These types, comparatively common and widespread, may have begun as early as the third century but were certainly in use in the second and possibly, in some areas, even later. The stratified assemblages from Castle Dore, Cornwall, add support to the Carn Euny sequence. On present, albeit tenuous, evidence therefore it would appear that the earliest South-Western Decorated Wares were probably inspired from Brittany at the end of the fifth century BC and thereafter developed throughout the Middle Iron Age as the result of local inventiveness. It was at some time during this period that the potters of Devon began local production but little can yet be said of the chronology of these more easterly developments.

Developments in Somerset need not have followed the same course as Cornwall. Although vessels from Cornwall and Devon were imported into Somerset it may well be that local production of the typical decorated jars and necked-bowls began somewhat later, perhaps after a local version of the saucepan pot continuum had already developed. If so it ought to be possible eventually to identify a saucepan pot phase belonging to an early part of the Middle Iron Age as has tentatively been anticipated above (p. 106).

Whereas, in Cornwall, decorated wares eventually gave way to plain cordoned wares some time in the first century BC, it would appear on

present evidence that, in Devon and Somerset, decorated wares continued in use for some decades longer and may even have lasted until the time of the Roman invasion. Much work remains to be done on the pottery of the south-west and until the results of more large-scale excavations are available little significant advance is likely. In the meantime it may be convenient to divide the South-Western Decorated Wares into three regional groupings based on the principal production centres in Cornwall, Devon and Somerset.

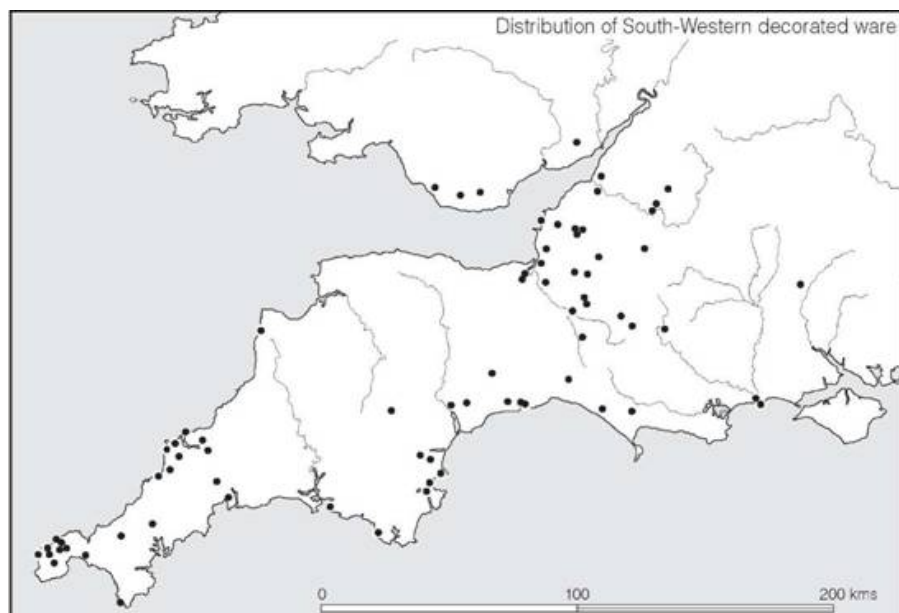


Figure 5.7 *Distribution of South-Western Decorated Wares* (source: author).

The scored wares of the Midlands: the Breedon–Ancaster group (Figures 5.8 and A:24)

The pottery of the Midlands, roughly between the Trent and the Thames, can be considered at two levels: as a widespread and long-lived coarse ware tradition, called here the Breedon–Ancaster group, and as a series of more localized style-zones represented by distinctive decorated fine wares, mainly bowl forms, which seem to have developed at a later date.

The Breedon–Ancaster group is characterized by a variety of jar and bowl forms, usually with simple rounded profiles, the surfaces of which are roughened by deep scoring which can be fairly regular or largely random. Some vessels may have finger-printing on the rim but this is thought to be a feature of an early stage which later dies out.

Pottery of this kind was originally referred to as *Trent valley A Ware* following its identification at Breedon-on-the-Hill, Leics. Here it has been named after two type-sites but the nomenclature *East Midland Scored Ware* is also used (Elsdon 1992). Detailed studies of the region (Challis and Harding 1975; Knight 1984; Elsdon 1992) have shown that the main concentration of scored wares lies in the east Midlands between the Trent, the Welland and the Nene, but closely related types are found as far east as the Chilterns and south to the Middle Thames region.

The original Breedon excavations provided no close dating evidence for the pottery, but Wachter (1964) has demonstrated a stratigraphical sequence suggesting occupation over a considerable period. Moreover, at Ancaster, Lincs., the excavation of a substantial open settlement, occupied by a community using scored jars, has yielded an iron involuted brooch and a bronze wire fibula with a four-coiled spring, high bow and recurved foot – characteristics which proclaim a La Tène I ancestry. While the brooches do not prove an early date, they are more likely to have been in use in the third or second century than much later. Typologically the pottery would not be out of place as early as the fifth or fourth century. Several radiocarbon determinations are available: Twywell, Northants, has produced a date of 395–201 Cal BC while Fengate (Padholm Road site) was dated 407–357 Cal BC. Both fall within the range anticipated on typological grounds. Associations elsewhere in the region, for example at Werrington and Cats Water near Fengate, suggest that scored wares may have continued in use, in some areas, as late as the first century BC. Taking the evidence overall we may suggest that the scored ware tradition probably developed from indigenous traditions in the fifth century BC and remained in common use over a considerable region until the appearance of wheel-made ceramics in the first century BC. During this time a number of distinctive regional fine ware styles developed.

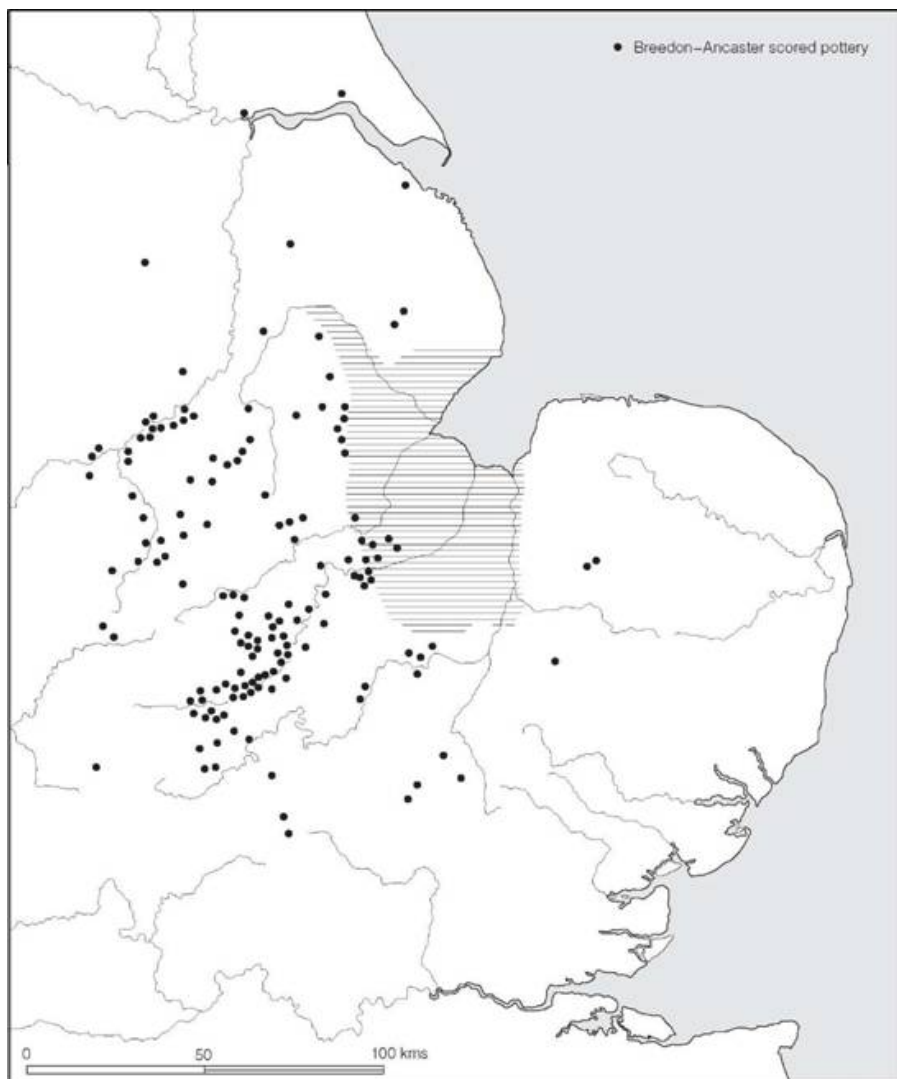


Figure 5.8 *Distribution of scored vessels of the fifth to first centuries in the east Midlands (source: Elsdon 1992).*

The bowl continuum of the east Midlands (Figure 5.9)

In the south and east Midlands, broadly the area between the Chilterns and the Jurassic Ridge, the ceramic assemblage is dominated by the open hemispherical bowl, usually with a simple beaded lip, made in a dark well-burnished fabric. In the early (undecorated) phase little regional distinction can be made among the bowl forms, but the coarse ware traditions show a twofold division between the Oxfordshire region, where the coarse vessels are usually plain, and the

Northamptonshire region, where scored wares, continuing the techniques of the Breedon–Ancaster style, predominate. This twofold division becomes strikingly apparent in the later (decorated) period when the decorative motifs of the bowls are considered. For these reasons, two separate style-zones are recognized.

The Stanton Harcourt–Cassington style (Figures 5.9 and A:25) In the Upper Thames valley a change to dark, well-burnished bowls becomes noticeable towards the end of the Long Wittenham–Allen's Pit style, and thereafter development continued until finely decorated vessels marked the culmination of the native tradition. Since many of the sites continued in use throughout this period, and few well-stratified groups have yet been recorded, it is difficult to isolate groups of the early undecorated phase from the later decorated phase. Nevertheless, the type-sites of Stanton Harcourt and Cassington have produced loosely associated assemblages containing only the ultimate simplification of the coarse ware shouldered jar together with plain bowl forms. Similar groups have more recently been discovered at Ashville (Abingdon) and Farmoor, Oxon.

Decorated bowls probably began to be manufactured some time in the second century. In the Oxford region common motifs, particularly well displayed by the material from Frilford, include pendent swags and arcs drawn in a variety of ways, often incorporating impressed circlets. Less frequently, zones of diagonally shaded lozenges were used. Decorated bowls of this type cluster in the Middle Thames valley, with outliers as far west as Salmonsbury. The form also occurs sporadically on the chalk to the south, as for example at Blewburton Hill. Some of the complexities of the data arising from a detailed regional study, and taking cognizance of site status, have been reviewed by Lambrick (1984).

Several sequences show that assemblages of bowl types were superseded by wheel-turned vessels of Aylesford–Swarling type, but the precise date of this change is at present undefined. In all probability it took place in the second half of the first century BC, but a later date is possible.

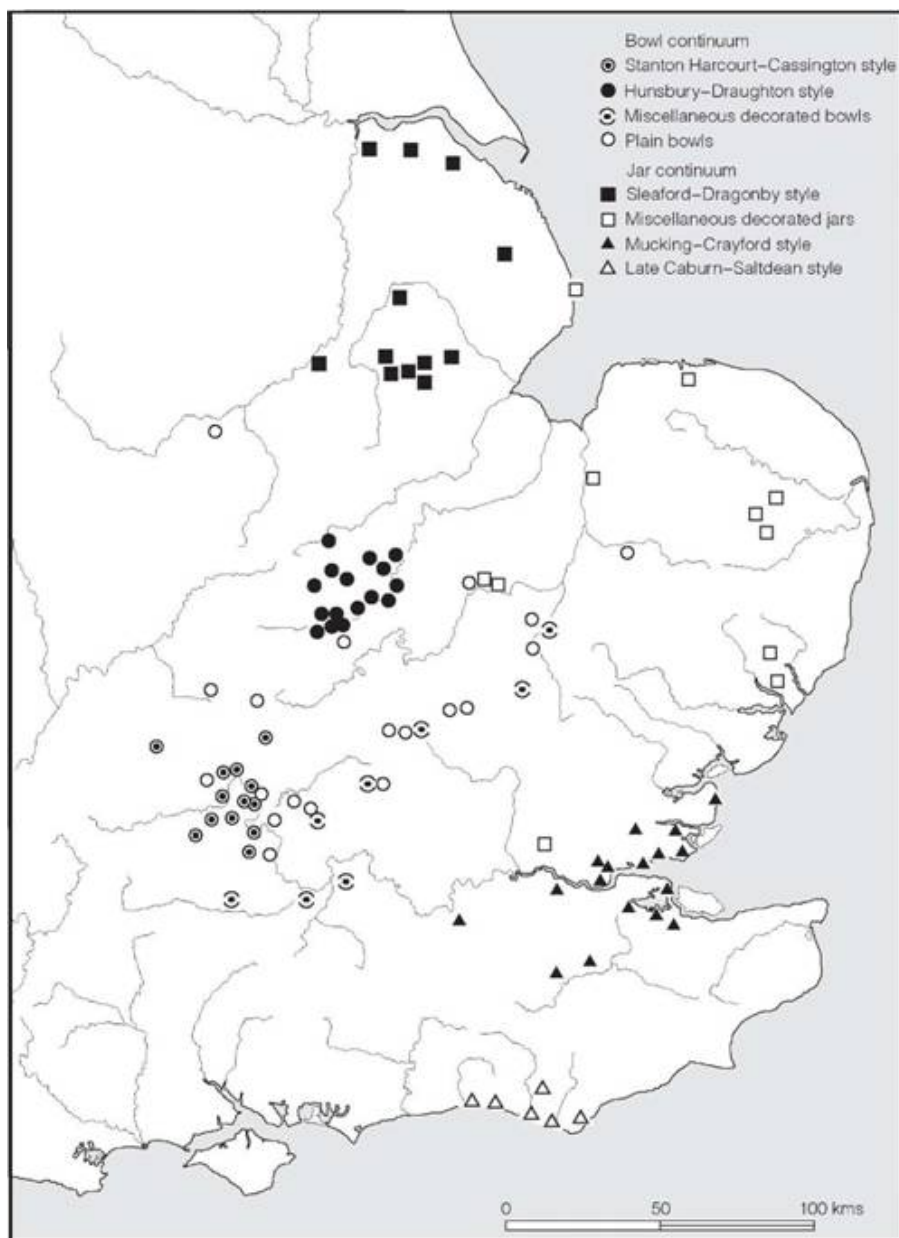


Figure 5.9 Distribution of decorated pottery styles in eastern England, first century BC to first century AD (source: author).

The Hunsbury–Draughton style (Figures 5.9 and A:26) A number of sites in Northamptonshire have now produced assemblages containing coarse jars, often of scored type, in association with plain well-made bowls. At Twywell, Northants, several well-stratified groups of this kind have been recovered, for one of which a single radiocarbon

determination of 395–201 Cal BC indicates a possible beginning for the style in the fourth century BC. At Draughton, a stratigraphical sequence was recognized, demonstrating that decorated forms developed later than assemblages containing only plain bowls. In all probability the hillfort at Hunsbury underwent a similar development, but all of the material recovered in the nineteenth century is unstratified. The fibulae, however – three La Tène I types and two of La Tène III – no doubt reflect the chronological range of the occupation. On typological grounds it is likely that the coarse-shouldered jars, simple bead-rimmed bowls and large jars with perforated lug handles, belong to the earlier period, while the elaborately decorated bowls developed later. The decoration of these vessels tends to be freer and more lively than those of Oxfordshire, relying on the Yin-Yang, or flowing scroll, for its effect. The influence of metalwork can be discerned (Elsdon 1976). Within Northamptonshire two separate local groups can be distinguished on the basis of decorative preferences: a southern group, close to Hunsbury, typified by the running scroll and berried cluster motif, and a northern group between Draughton and Stanwick where the running scroll is enlivened with a single dimple. These local groups are likely to reflect the output of specific production centres (Jackson and Dix 1989; Foster 2000).

Several sites occupied in the decorated bowl phase continued in use during the period when Aylesford–Swarling types were common, but the change in ceramic style remains undated. At Moulton Park, however, a date in the first half of the first century AD has been suggested.

The Chilterns (Figures 5.9 and A:27) Ceramic material of the fourth to first centuries from the Ouse valley, the Chilterns and adjacent areas of East Anglia is at present sparse, and, with the exception of a few notable sites, poorly stratified. For this reason no attempt has yet been made to define individual style-zones.

The most distinctive pottery types, apart from a few imported saucepan pots, include wide-mouthed bowls with beaded lips, usually made in dark highly burnished wares, and coarse ware jars frequently decorated with deeply scored lines. Decoration of the bowls is rare but includes shallow tooling, the use of impressed dots and rouletted lines. The only unifying factor between the various sites is the existence of heavily scored jars which recur frequently over the whole area, and derive from the coarse ware tradition of the Breedon–Ancaster style.

Some sites have produced decorated bowls. At Puddlehill, Beds., a number of stratified groups have been found associating the coarse ware and bowl types. Decoration is rare, but shallow tooled curvilinear lines were used on one vessel to give a flowing scroll

effect. Shallow tooling of this kind is also recorded at Barley, Herts., and at Cambridge (Addenbrooke's), where the decoration resembles that of the Hunsbury style. Further north at St Ives, Hunts., and Arminghall and Wareham, Norfolk, rouletting, and dot impression occur, but the quantity of material is small.

The style must have begun after the decline of the Chinnor–Wandlebury and Darmsden–Linton styles, but it is difficult to demonstrate the exact relationship between them. In all probability one developed imperceptibly into the other some time during the fourth or third century. During the latter part of the first century BC or the early first century AD, the area gradually came under the influence of Aylesford–Swarling ceramic technology, which brought native traditions to an end.

Although it would be possible to group the Chiltern material together as a single style-zone named after one or more of the sites producing decorated wares, e.g. Puddlehill, it is felt advisable at present to leave the group unnamed and only loosely defined until more well-stratified assemblages become available for study.

The Trent valley

Few sites are known in the Trent valley, but in the pages above (pp. 109–11) it has been possible to define in general terms a Breedon–Ancaster group dating broadly from the fifth century. It would seem that this tradition continued to develop throughout the second and first centuries, during which time regional styles became recognizable among the finer decorated wares. Some of these have now been described.

In the Trent valley itself, few groups of the second or first century are available, with the exception of a small collection from Breedon-on-the-Hill, which includes bowl and open jar forms decorated with shallow tooled designs of curvilinear form incorporating impressed dots. It may well be possible in the future to recognize a distinctive style-zone in this region.

The jar continuum of eastern England (Figure 5.9)

It has long been recognized that a number of sites in the east of England, in Essex, Kent and Sussex, have produced a stylistically similar range of decorated jars. These were at one time classified together as 'South-Eastern B' (Ward Perkins 1938), later renamed 'Southern Third B' (Hawkes 1959). More recently the decorative motifs of these vessels have been discussed (Elsdon 1975). The discovery of well-stratified groups of similar material from Lincolnshire, in particular at Dragonby and Old Sleaford, and from Essex, at Gun Hill and Mucking, has enabled the chronological

position of these loosely related types to be considered afresh.

There would appear to be some value in regarding the widely distributed groups as sharing in a common tradition, for not only do the forms of the vessels closely resemble each other, but so also do the motifs of decoration and the techniques by which they were applied.

The Sleaford–Dragonby style (Figures 5.9 and A:28) Between the rivers Welland and Humber a number of sites have been identified, producing a range of ceramics which typologically follow the Breedon–Ancaster group and are succeeded by wheel-turned types, similar to Aylesford–Swarling ceramics, which characterize the pottery of the Corieltauvi. The predominant type is the bowl or jar form with slightly everted rim, usually fired black and frequently burnished on the surface. Alongside the fine wares are found coarse-shouldered jars made in gritty ware. Some of the finer bowls and jars are decorated with stamped circlets linked with arcs and swags impressed with a fine-toothed roulette wheel but some regional variation in style of decoration may be discerned (Elsdon 1996). At both of the type-sites these assemblages lie at the beginning of a sequence which develops uninterruptedly into the first century AD. The high technical quality and the uniformity of the fine wares suggest the probability of commercial production, but it is too early to speculate on the number of production centres involved. That many of the decorative techniques continued to be practised after the introduction of Aylesford–Swarling types is an indication of the strength of the local traditions.

The date range of the Sleaford–Dragonby style is difficult to define, but it is possible that the decorated types began to develop as early as the late second century BC, and that Aylesford–Swarling influence interrupted the development towards the end of the first century BC or the beginning of the first century AD. Detailed chronological and typological arguments are presented by Elsdon (1997) for Old Sleaford and by Elsdon in May (1996) for Dragonby.

East Anglia

East Anglia is at present virtually a blank largely because surprisingly few Iron Age sites have been published, but a few decorated sherds from Arminghall, Wareham and Tasborough in Norfolk and Burch and Bucklesham in Suffolk hint at the existence of a fine ware tradition that has yet to be adequately defined.

The Mucking–Crayford style (Figures 5.9 and A:29) A number of sites clustering around the Thames estuary have produced assemblages containing well-made burnished jars, usually with everted rims and high shoulders, and with bases which may be of the omphalos or foot-ring type. Many of the vessels are decorated, the favourite motifs

including arcs, often interlacing and sometimes in relation to stamped circlets. In the past the decorated vessels have been selected for comment, with little notice being taken of the associated plain wares. This unfortunate tendency has resulted, in part, from the lack of good stratified groups, a lack which the excavations at Mucking and Little Waltham, Essex, have done much to alleviate. At Gun Hill, Essex, coarse wares and fine plain wares have been discovered in loose association with decorated vessels, indicating a considerable range of broadly contemporary types including plain bead-rimmed jars and everted-rimmed bowls in burnished fabrics, the ancestors of both of which can be traced back to the Darmsden–Linton group. At Little Waltham, however, the entire Middle Iron Age sequence consists of plain wares.

Across the Thames in Kent few associated groups have yet been recovered, but the unstratified collections from Crayford include plain vessels of bead-rimmed and everted-rim type together with decorated forms. Elsewhere in Kent and the Weald the once-named ‘Wealden Culture’ (Ward Perkins 1944) is best seen as a part of the same style-group, possibly representing an early phase before decoration became common. Among the more important sites producing this limited range of undecorated types is the hillfort at Oldbury.

Within the Lower Thames region covered by the Mucking–Crayford style, and particularly in Essex, a number of sites have produced examples of jars decorated with free-flowing curvilinear scrolls. It is quite possible that these represent an earlier phase of the Mucking–Crayford style and it has been proposed that it might be called the Mucking–Oldbury group to distinguish it (Brown 1991).

Little dating evidence has yet been published, but at Gun Hill pottery of the Mucking–Crayford style can be shown to pre-date the appearance of wheel-turned vessels of the Aylesford–Swarling group. More precision will be possible when the assemblage from Mucking has been published. That the style fits between the Darmsden–Linton group and the Aylesford–Swarling group is, however, clear.

The Late Caburn–Saltdean style (Figures 5.9 and A:29) A considerable range of decorated ceramics has been recovered from Sussex, but seldom from reliably stratified contexts. A number of groups have, however, been found in which saucepan pots predominate: these have been referred to above (p. 104) as the Cissbury–Caburn style of the saucepan pot continuum. At the Caburn several pits, presumably late in the occupation sequence, have produced vessels unlike those of the saucepan pot phase but comparable to those of the Mucking–Crayford style. They may be characterized as large jars with bulbous bodies, constricted mouths and out-rolled rims. Frequently they are decorated with curvilinear designs, sometimes in the form of arcs, and

occasionally stamped circlets are employed. The simplest explanation is that these types, which we here characterize as the Late Caburn–Saltdean style, developed out of the preceding saucepan pot tradition. Vessels of this type have been found on a number of sites in East Sussex, but usually in unstratified contexts. One of the best-preserved examples is the single vessel from Saltdean.

At what stage the style developed is at present undefined, but some time late in the second century would seem possible. Thereafter elements of the style continued in use until the Roman Conquest, apparently little influenced by Aylesford–Swarling types. The only readily distinguishable changes include the appearance of cordons, the development of simple zoned decoration and a change in fabrics as the technique of wheel-turning became widespread. These later developments, which can tentatively be dated to the late first century BC and early first century AD, are considered again below, where they are referred to as Eastern Atrebatian pottery (pp. 169–71).

Northern England: the Dane's Graves–Staxton style (Figure A:30)

In a detailed discussion of the metalwork of the La Tène cultures of Yorkshire, Stead (1965) suggested a division into two phases. The first, characterized by the burial at Cowlam, is considered to have begun in the fifth century; the second phase, represented by the burials at Arras and Dane's Graves, is probably not much earlier than the third to second centuries. The excavations of Dane's Graves and of the Driffield and Rigg's Farm burials have produced a collection of pottery belonging to a single stylistic group in which bucket-shaped vessels with thick bases and frequently with internally bevelled rims predominate. These types probably derive from vessels in the earlier Grimthorpe style, but some influence from the saucepan pot style of the south, or indeed from contemporary and similar types in France, might possibly be represented. At Garton Slack, in addition to simple jars with thick everted rims, the assemblage also contained a shouldered bowl with foot-ring base which resembles northern French types (Challis and Harding 1975, figure 34). A settlement site producing pottery of this kind is known at Staxton, where a palisade trench was found together with pits and a quantity of occupation debris. How long the style continued in use is impossible to say, but it is unlikely to have outlived the end of the first century BC.

The Late Iron Age ceramic development of south-eastern Britain

The ceramic development of the first century BC and early first century AD in the south of Britain is more appropriately considered in later chapters in the context of the tribal divisions which can, at that

time, begin to be recognized. Here, for the sake of completeness, a brief summary will be offered.

Four broad regional developments can be recognized.

The Aylesford–Swarling group (Figures A:31–2)

This group is characterized by an array of highly distinctive wheel-turned vessels representing a considerable variety of types among which elegant pedestal-based jars are particularly distinctive. The range of types is broadly similar to first-century BC vessels found in Belgic Gaul and has, in the past, usually been referred to as ‘Belgic’ although the term Aylesford–Swarling is to be preferred since it carries with it no pseudo-historical preconceptions. The Aylesford–Swarling style of pottery became popular in the east of Britain in the period after the middle of the first century BC and was increasingly widely adopted, gradually replacing local styles as far north as the Humber, across the east Midlands and into the Upper Thames valley and the Cotswolds.

The Atrebat groups (Figures A:34–5)

In the south of Britain – in Sussex, Hampshire, Wiltshire and Berkshire – a rather less elaborate wheel-turned pottery tradition began to develop in the early first century BC and it is tentatively suggested below (p. 127) that this may have been initiated by incoming settlers from Belgic Gaul arriving in the Solent area. The main vessel types represented are shouldered bowls and bead-rimmed jars.

Three broad divisions can be made: Eastern Atrebat, Southern Atrebat and Northern Atrebat. The Eastern Atrebat group develops from the earlier Late Caburn–Saltdean style while the Southern and Northern Atrebat groups owe much to the preceding saucepan pot style, the main difference being that the Northern group appears to be more influenced by Aylesford–Swarling types in circulation in the Thames valley.

The Durotrigian group (Figure A:36)

This group developed in Dorset directly from the preceding Maiden Castle–Marnhull style but the introduction of wheel-turning imposed a far greater precision on the forms. There is also some influence apparent from northern Armorican wares which were imported into Hengistbury Head at the beginning of the first century BC. Perhaps the most striking feature of the Durotrigian assemblage is its distinctiveness from that of neighbouring regions.

The South-Western Cordoned wares (Figure A:37)

The communities of the south-western peninsula developed a wheel-turned pottery assemblage characterized by necked jars, tazze-like bowls and everted-rimmed jars ornamented with horizontal cordons. Stratified sequences showed that the cordoned wares were later than

South-Western Decorated Wares and continued in use into the Roman period. It is possible that the technique of wheel-turning was introduced from Armorica.

In other areas of western Britain, in particular the Severn region stretching from Devon to the Welsh borderland, local ceramic traditions which had developed in the Middle Iron Age seem to have continued little changed until the Roman period.

‘Aceramic’ Britain: Wales and the north

The use of the word ‘aceramic’ is perhaps a little too stark as a description of Britain between the Jurassic Ridge and the Scottish Highlands but its very starkness helps to stress the enormous difference in material culture between the south and east and the north and west. In the south and east, as we have seen from the above discussion, pottery formed an important element in the material culture. Not only was pottery prolific but it was made with increasing technical assurance and served as a vehicle for the community to express itself. In most regions a variety of forms were being made, including large storage jars, cooking vessels and a range of smaller pots suitable for serving food and drink. Although wooden, leather and horn vessels may have augmented pottery it is evident from the sheer quantity of pots recovered from excavations that ceramic containers played a significant part in everyday life.

In the north and west of Britain, except for the extreme north-west, pottery was very much rarer and in some areas altogether absent. In these regions organic containers must have served, augmented, more rarely, by bronze. Where pots occur they are for the most part large coarse ware jars, devoid of decoration, of the kind that could have been used for cooking. A range of such vessels found between the Trent and the Tyne has been conveniently gathered together by Challis and Harding (1975). An overview of the ceramic tradition of the whole eastern region from the Humber to north of the Aln (Evans 1995), presenting a detailed assessment of all the available evidence, confirms that simple coarse ware jars were the only types in use. It was, however, possible to discern regional preferences for certain rim types and a study of the ceramic fabrics distinguishes diorite-tempered wares concentrating in the Tees valley from calcite-tempered wares found more commonly in the south of the region. That said, pottery does not seem to have been culturally significant among these northern communities.

The north-west of the British Isles

Unlike the rest of northern Britain, the extreme north and west – including the coastal areas north of the Firth of Clyde, Caithness and Sutherland, and the Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland – were occupied by communities who chose to produce distinctive pottery often of high quality. The ceramic tradition, rooted in third- to second-millennium production, developed throughout the first millennium with little external influence well into the Roman era. Excavations at Dun Mor Vaul on Tiree, Dun Vulan on South Uist and Sollas on North Uist, and at Jarlshof and Clickhimin on Shetland, provide firm stratigraphical sequences against which ceramic development can be traced.

The Shetland sequence (Figures A:38–9)

At Clickhimin continuous occupation from the seventh century BC until the sixth or seventh century AD enables the ceramic tradition to be seen in relation to the structural development of the site. In the pre-broch phase, three periods have been isolated, of which the first two can be collated with the early occupation at Jarlshof.

Clickhimin I: seventh to sixth centuries

The first period of occupation is represented at the type-site by the establishment of an oval stone-built house constructed in a technique dating back to the Neolithic period.

The range of pottery was restricted to barrel- and bucket-shaped jars, sometimes with flat- topped rims. At Jarlshof they were occasionally decorated with one or two plain cordons. These simple forms are closely related to the indigenous tradition of the Bronze Age.

Clickhimin II: sixth to fifth centuries

The second phase was marked at Clickhimin by the establishment of a roundhouse within the earlier enclosure and at Jarlshof by the construction of clusters of circular stone-built huts over the ruins of the earlier houses. There was now a marked change in the quality of the pottery, with the introduction of shouldered jars alongside the simple bucket and barrel shapes. Some differences, possibly chronological, exist between the vessels from the two sites: those from Clickhimin are finer and slacker in profile compared with the Jarlshof assemblage. Since many similarities exist between these Shetland types and contemporary pottery from the south and east of Britain, it has been suggested that a colonizing movement from the south was the cause, introducing the roundhouse tradition as well as knowledge of ironworking and improved ceramic technology. The argument is unconvincing since it may equally well be argued that the change was brought about by casual maritime trading.

Clickhimin III: fifth to first centuries

The third period at Clickhimin, not represented at Jarlshof, was initiated by the construction of a stone ring-wall to defend the farmstead. The associated pottery was more varied in form than in the previous periods, the commonest types being ovoid jars with short everted or beaded rims (Figure A:39). Four decorative techniques were employed: the internal fluting of the rims, the application of a plastic moulded strip in the neck angle, the deliberate curvilinear grooving of the inside of the base, and various forms of impressed or stabbed decoration – usually stab-filled pendent triangles, isolated impressed circlets and impressed arcs of circles. There is a strong regional character about the assemblage, but general similarities with peripheral Urnfield wares in France may hint at the possibility of some kind of maritime contact dating back to the fifth century.

Few other ceramic sequences are available for study. At the broch of Crosskirk, Caithness, several small groups of pottery were isolated from layers pre-dating and contemporary with the broch, but apart from generalized similarities with the Shetland sequence the wares seem to be very local in style. Much the same can be said of the assemblages from Bu Broch and the broch of Gurness on Orkney.

The Hebridean sequence (Figure A:40)

The Western Isles, including the Outer Hebrides and the inner islands stretching from Skye in the north to Iona in the south, were the home to communities whose material culture included assemblages of elaborate decorated pottery. The problem has been to establish reliable stratified sequences and to correlate these with radiocarbon dates. Early attempts (Young 1966) have been modified as new material has become available. A major advance came with the publication of the ceramic sequence from Dun Mor Vul on Tiree (MacKie 1974) where it was possible to isolate a pre-broch assemblage including two main types of vessel, large barrel-shaped urns and smaller wide-bodied jars with everted rims. Both were decorated in a variety of ways with simple geometric motifs scored or stamped in zones beneath the rim. Some had applied plait-like girth cordons, and on some of the jars, above cordons of this kind, were zones of concentric semicircles (Figure A:40). A chronology was proposed based on radiocarbon assessments but subsequent surveys of Hebridean ceramics (Topping 1987; Lane 1990) throw some doubt on the validity of the Dun Mor Vul sequence.

The publication of new assemblages from Sollas, North Uist, in 1991 and Dun Vulcan, South Uist, in 1999, both contained within a framework of radiocarbon dates, has greatly clarified the Hebridean sequence and, together with pottery from other sites, has allowed a broad overview of ceramic development from the Late Bronze Age to

the Early Modern period to be offered (Campbell 2002). The Late Bronze Age phase, lasting here until as late as c. 400 BC, is typified by bucket-shaped vessels without decoration. In the Early Iron Age (c. 400 BC–AD 100) the bucket form continues, but decoration, in the form of finger-marking below the rim, coarse incised chevrons, thick cordons and applied ring impressions, appears for the first time. These techniques continue to develop throughout the Middle Iron Age (AD 100–300), which is characterized by an abundance of decorated ware. The stratified sequence from Sollas shows that over this period there was a change from incised vessels with slack, weak-shouldered profiles to more bulbous vessels with sharply everted rims bearing channelled and arcaded decoration. It has been suggested that the fashion for decorated ware in the second and third centuries AD was, at least in part, influenced by contact with the Roman world.

Summary

This brief survey of the ceramic development of Britain, imperfect though it must of necessity be, provides an insight into many aspects of Iron Age society. Viewed overall it vividly demonstrates the divide which existed throughout between the south and east of the country and the north and west ([Figure 5.10](#)). In the south and east, when pottery production was a significant domestic activity, the ceramic record not only informs our understanding of the technological and artistic achievements of the different communities but provides a sound basis for the establishment of a chronology and allows something of the spatial organization of society to be appreciated.

By the end of the second millennium BC south-eastern Britain was occupied by stable sedentary communities whose agrarian systems had developed over many centuries. The pottery in use at the time showed a notable degree of similarity over large areas – a development which must in part be due to several centuries of conservatism. In the tenth to eighth centuries much of the south-east, particularly the coastal and riverine regions, was caught up in complex exchange networks which linked Britain to the Continent and are best exemplified in the archaeological record by the bronze metalwork of the Ewart Park and Carp's-Tongue Sword Complexes. The pottery of this considerable region was similar throughout. It owed much to traditional Bronze Age technology and stylistic preferences, but new types in the form of sharp-shouldered jars and angled bowls were appearing. It is tempting to suggest that these types imitated bronze vessels, particularly the high-shouldered buckets which were now reaching the country.

In the eighth century, while the coastal zone was sharing a broadly

common material culture, in the heart of Wessex a quite different ceramic assemblage was developing characterized by a highly distinctive series of decorated bowls and jars. The contrast between the pottery of the two zones is striking, and may, in part, be a statement of socio-political differences. This dichotomy was maintained throughout the seventh century: the Wessex group continued to evolve while the southern and eastern coastal groups maintained a broad ceramic similarity throughout, developing a similar range of small angular bowls and jars strongly reminiscent of contemporary bronze forms.

In the period which followed (Early Iron Age, 600–400/300 BC), radical changes took place, the most significant of which was the emergence of a number of highly distinctive regional styles each characterized by a limited range of forms and an exclusive repertoire of decorative techniques. It is tempting to see in this development a growing awareness of ethnic identity.

During the latter part of the fifth century Continental influences become apparent in three disparate regions: in Cornwall the earliest decorated pottery so far discovered was similar to contemporary Breton styles, though produced in local fabrics; La Tène pottery forms turned up in the Thames region and adjacent areas of East Anglia to the north, with a painted pottery tradition becoming established in east Kent; while in Yorkshire the appearance of a distinctive style of burial rite, involving the use of the mortuary cart, echoes contemporary rites in northern France. Clearly the interchange of ideas between the coastal regions of Britain and the adjacent Continent was widespread, if only for a brief period, in the decades before 400 BC. The evidence of imported metalwork tells the same story (pp. 465–74). The nature of these contacts is difficult to assess. The introduction of a mortuary rite in Yorkshire, together with the associated range of Continental-inspired artefacts, strongly suggests the immigration of a small population including an élite, but the ceramic innovations in the Thames region, Kent and Cornwall need imply little more than active systems of cross-Channel exchange.

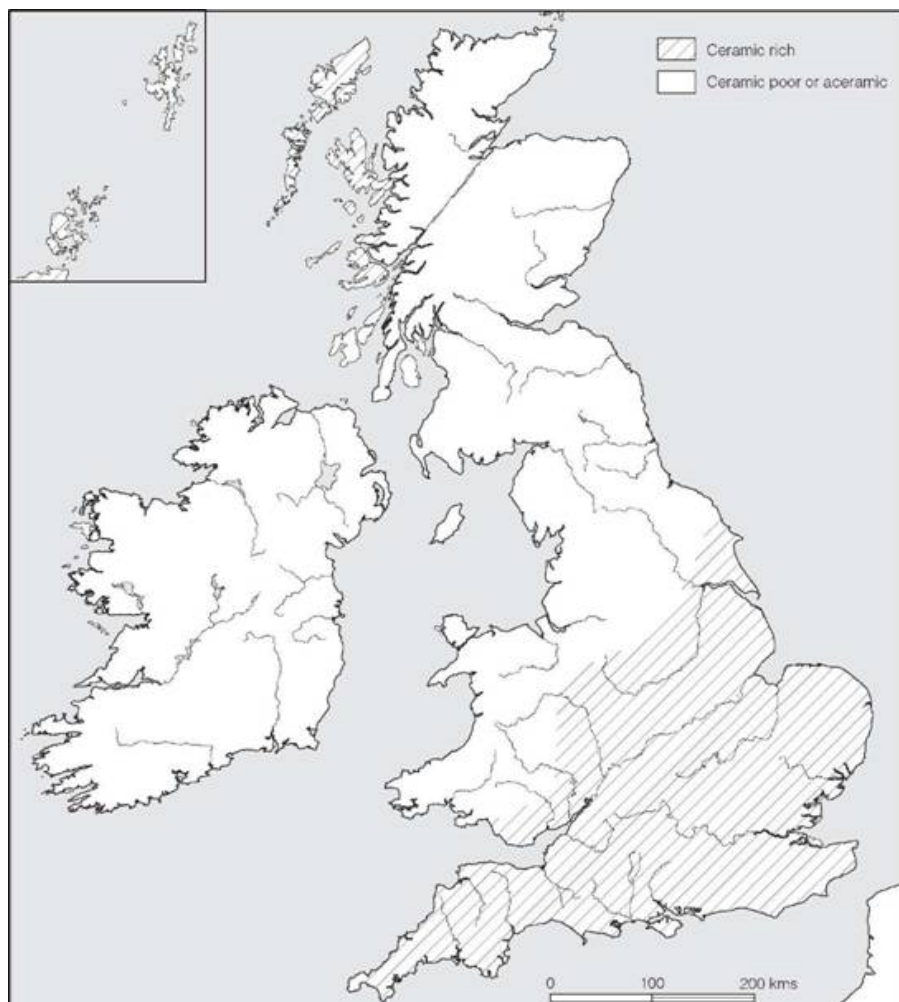


Figure 5.10 *The ceramic-rich zones of Britain (source: author).*

c. 200 BC

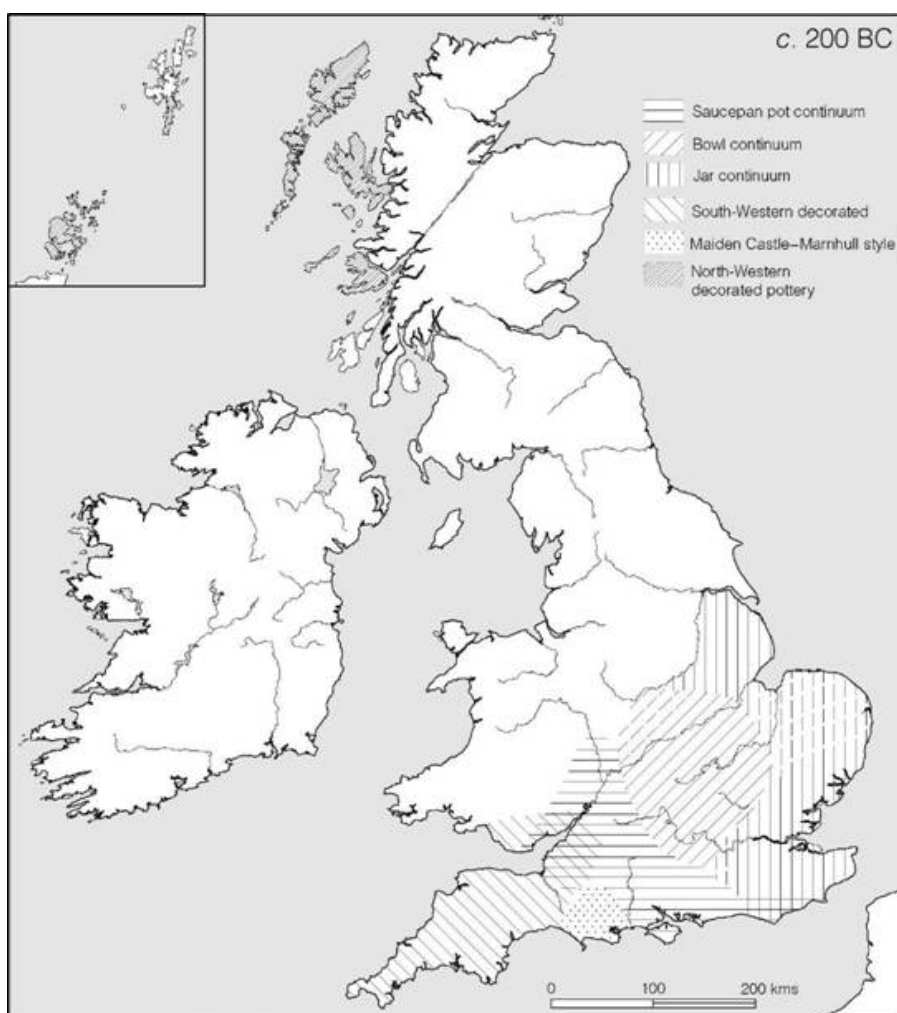


Figure 5.11 Ceramic groupings in Britain in the Middle Iron Age (source: author).

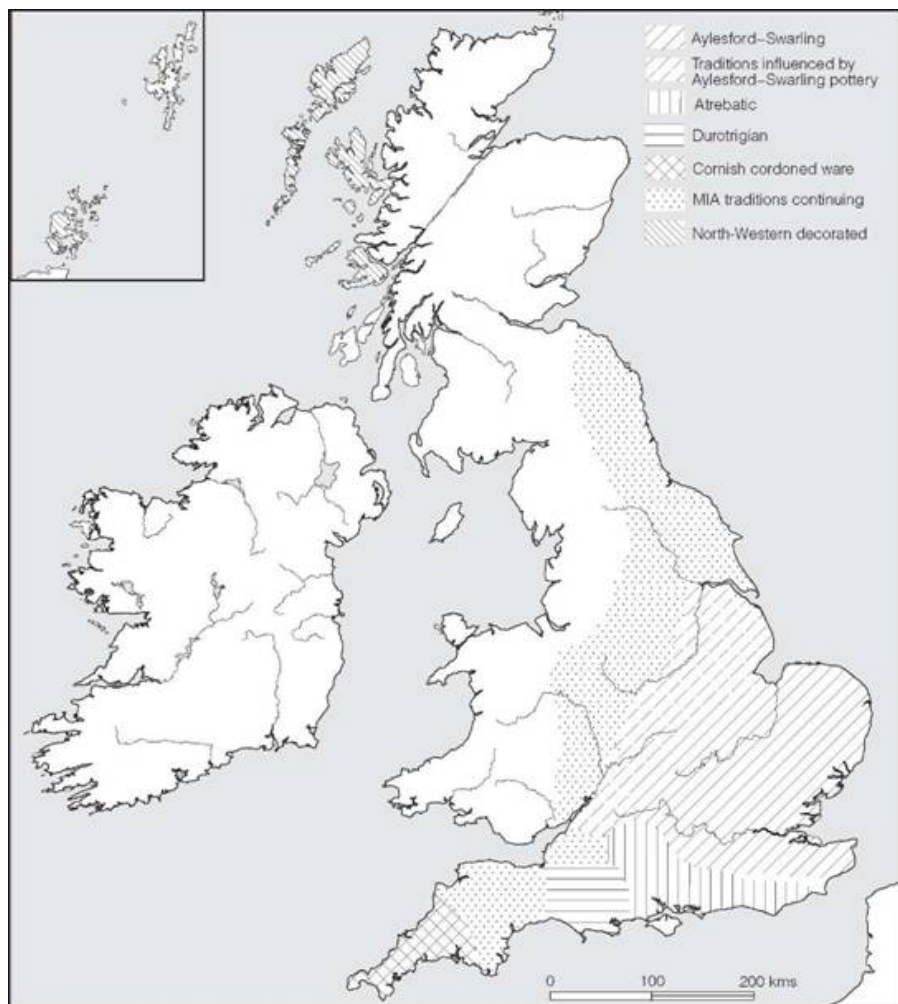


Figure 5.12 Ceramic groupings in Britain in the Late Iron Age (source: author).

After c. 400 BC Britain appears to become more remote from Continental development. During the Middle Iron Age period (400/300–100 BC) regional styles of pottery continued to evolve, reflecting much the same territorial divides which had become established as early as the sixth century. Standing back from the palimpsest of localized style-zones, it is possible to distinguish four broad divisions (Figure 5.11): a *south-west region*, extending into Somerset and south Wales and characterized by a free curvilinear style of ceramic ornament which has much in common with Armorica; a *central southern region* stretching from Sussex west across Wessex into the Cotswolds and Welsh Marches, typified by straight-sided saucepan

pots; a *Midland region*, extending from the Thames valley to the Trent, characterized by hemispherical bowls; and an *eastern region*, essentially coastal in distribution, from East Sussex to Lincolnshire where the predominant form was the highly decorated jar. These broad regional divisions are also reflected in the type of settlement pattern which had emerged, a fact which suggests that the pottery styles might provide an insight into real socio-economic groupings. It will be argued later ([chapter 21](#)) that in the distinctive style-zones which begin to crystallize in the sixth century BC we may be seeing incipient tribal groupings. Once established these entities are maintained throughout the Middle Iron Age with little change. The broader regional groupings which it is possible to discern by the third century may indicate tribal confederacies: at the very least they present a generalized picture of regional contact and contrast.

By about 100 BC the Middle Iron Age system was at its most developed ([Figure 5.12](#)). In some areas ceramic styles continued to evolve, little changed well into the first century BC and even the first century AD, but in others – the coastal region of central southern Britain and the Lower Thames valley – new influences from the Continent initiated widespread socio-political and economic change. These Late Iron Age developments will be considered more fully in [chapters 6–8](#).

6

Protohistory to history, c. 150 BC to AD 43

Until the middle of the second century BC the history of the British Isles cannot be written in terms of identifiable individuals and their actions. At best we have to be content to define groups of people through their artefacts, the structures they built and the effects they had on their environment. But the two centuries preceding the Roman invasion of AD 43 lie in the shadows of history – the literate world was encroaching. Broadly, this period, which is conventionally referred to as the Late Iron Age, can be divided into two: c. 150–55 BC and 55 BC–AD 43. In the first part, movements of people and spheres of tribal influence can be dimly distinguished, largely through the evidence of coin typology and distribution; by the second, following the invasions of Julius Caesar, we can write of the actual people, the kings and demi-kings of the British aristocracy, and begin to assess their relationship to each other and the Roman world, reflected in contemporary historical writings as well as in the numismatic evidence.

Historical sources and coins introduce a new dimension to our understanding of Late Iron Age society but they also pose new problems of interpretation. The brief historical references which survive for this period have come down to us through a series of filters: at best they are anecdotal and incomplete; at worst they may be deliberately misleading. Clearly considerable care must be taken before using them too literally and we must accept that the scraps that do survive are quite inadequate to allow an historical narrative to be created for the period.

The interpretation of Celtic coinage presents a rather more complex array of problems and, not surprisingly, views have changed quite radically over the years. It has long been recognized that the coins found in Britain can be divided into two broad groups: those minted in Gaul and transported across the Channel by undefined mechanisms and those made in Britain, the types being based in the first instance on imported examples. The most prolific group of imports came from Belgic Gaul, roughly the area between the Seine and the Rhine, and are found concentrated in south-eastern Britain. These were called

Gallo-Belgic and were divided by D.F. Allen into six types, A–F, which, he believed, reached Britain in a series of waves between c. 120 and 50 BC (D.F. Allen 1961a). The belief that these waves represented successive bands of invaders was further elaborated by C.F.C. Hawkes (1968). Both writers accepted that Gallo-Belgic A–D coins were brought to Britain at different periods before Caesar's invasions, Gallo-Belgic E dated to the time of the Gallic War and Gallo-Belgic F reflected a later incursion led by Commius about 50 BC. An alternative view was put forward by Kent (1978), who saw the first wave as Gallo-Belgic B reaching Britain in the early first century BC, followed by A and C arriving at the same time as Gallo-Belgic E, which is believed to be the coinage used by the Belgic confederacy to wage war against the Romans in and after 58 BC (Scheers 1972).

Kent's view has not been widely accepted and it is now generally believed that Gallo-Belgic A–C found their way into Britain during the century or so before the Caesarian campaigns while Gallo-Belgic E and F represent the war coinage of the period 60–50 BC (Haselgrove 1992, 1993a, 1996). Other commentators, however, still remain unconvinced that the Gallo-Belgic coinage can tell us much more than any other poorly dated import of the first century BC (Burnett 1995).

There has been a continuing debate about the validity of using coin evidence to reconstruct a protohistory. Collis (1971a and b) preferred to interpret coinage according to an economic rather than a political model while Hogg (1971) went so far as to question whether coin distributions represented significant tribal or political entities, or were the result of 'random flight'. A detailed reconsideration of the Gallo-Belgic coinage and that conventionally ascribed to the Catuvellauni and Trinovantes, however, encouraged Rodwell (1976) to conclude that, with care, coins can legitimately be used to reconstruct the outlines of political history and to define tribal territories.

The most comprehensive development in the study of British Celtic numismatics in recent years has been a thorough reassessment of the entire series by R. Van Arsdell (1989) based on a first-hand consideration of the coins themselves. This has provided a number of new perspectives reflecting on the social, economic and political development of the Late Iron Age.

Other significant publications, of more limited scope, include a new study of the potin coinage (Haselgrove 1988), a catalogue of the British Celtic coins in the British Museum (Hobbs 1995) and monographs on the coins of the Dobunni (Van Arsdell and de Jersey 1994) and the Atrebatres and Regni (Bean 2000). All offer new insights though there remain many areas of debate and dispute. The most accessible balanced overview of the subject is provided by de Jersey (1996).

External influences: Belgae and Romans

150–55 BC

We have seen in the preceding chapters that by the end of the Middle Iron Age the communities of south-eastern Britain had established an equilibrium with their landscape. Many settlements had been in use for centuries, farmsteads were densely scattered, and there is some evidence to suggest that population was increasing. Against this background it is possible to detect in the ceramic evidence a degree of territoriality which may well reflect the emergence of distinct tribal units. The picture is essentially one of indigenous development with little evidence of external contact from Continental Europe.

The Late Iron Age presents many significant contrasts; above all it was a time when the British Isles was brought once more into direct contact with the Continent by the interchange of peoples: mercenaries, invading armies, embassies and traders. All are directly attested in the historical sources and may sometimes, with the eye of faith, be seen dimly reflected in the archaeological data.

One question which has occupied commentators for over a century has been the problem of the Belgic invasion. Julius Caesar was quite explicit: he records that people coming from Belgic Gaul raided the maritime areas of Britain and eventually settled. Assuming this to be correct the problem has been to locate the area settled by the immigrants and to assess their impact. Most writers since A.J. Evans (1890) have preferred to equate the Belgae with the Aylesford–Swarling culture of Kent, Essex and Hertfordshire, basing part of the argument on the distribution of imported Gallo-Belgic coins. This would take with it the assumption that the numbers were large enough to inspire widespread and lasting cultural change. One problem, however, is that no element of the Aylesford–Swarling culture can be shown to pre-date the Caesarian invasion. While this does not pose an insuperable problem for the traditional view, it calls for caution. An alternative approach, which has much to offer, is to ask where the Romans themselves believed the Belgae to be located. The answer is in Hampshire where the Roman name of the Roman town at Winchester is *Venta Belgarum* – the ‘market of the Belgae’. If these were the descendants of the Belgae to whom Caesar referred, then the ‘maritime’ region where they initially settled can be identified as the shores of the Solent (Cunliffe 1984d) ([Figure 6.1](#)). Additional support for this view comes in part from the settlement evidence, which suggests a dislocation some time towards the

beginning of the first century BC, and from the fact that in the aftermath of Caesar's campaigns another group of Belgae, led by Commius, fleeing from the Romans to Britain to 'join his own people', must have made a similar landfall before establishing their new territory to the north of the first Belgae, with their capital at *Calleva* (Silchester) (pp. 172–3). If it is accepted that Caesar's Belgae settled in Hampshire the numbers may have been comparatively small, since they seem to have made comparatively little impact on the material culture of the area other than introducing a new ceramic technology.

The second cultural influence to impinge upon the coast of southern Britain came, albeit indirectly, from the Roman world. At the end of the second century BC Rome annexed the Mediterranean coastal region of Gaul and created the province of Transalpine. The ramifications for free Gaul and for southern Britain were considerable for the annexation was quickly followed by the economic exploitation of the neighbouring barbarian lands. In return for wine and other Mediterranean luxuries the natives provided slaves and a range of raw materials, particularly metals (Cunliffe 1987).

One of the trade routes used at this time was the Atlantic route linking the Gaulish river systems of the Garonne and Loire to Brittany and Britain. The details of this commerce will be considered below (chapter 17). Suffice it to say here that a major port-of-trade developed at Hengistbury Head, Dorset, through which the exploitation of the resources of southern Britain was articulated. The impact which the sudden proximity of the Roman consumer market had on the communities of central southern and south-western Britain is difficult to assess, but its demands for raw materials and slaves in return for luxury goods cannot have failed to have had a disrupting effect on the traditional embedded economy of the Middle Iron Age. It may have been one of the causes for the wide-scale abandonment of hillforts over much of the south at about this time.

The reformation of British society 130–55 BC

While central southern Britain was experiencing the effects of long-distance trade and (if we are correct) a limited immigration of Belgic settlers, the south-east was bound in contact of a different kind with the adjacent parts of Belgic Gaul. The nature of these contacts is obscure but the classical sources provide some hints. Caesar offers two relevant comments: that the Britons had served in most of the Gallic Wars (*BG* IV 20,1) and that Diviciacus, King of the Suessiones, had dominions in Britain (*BG* II 4,7). Both statements are open to a wide

variety of interpretations but at the very least they imply close diplomatic ties across the Channel. In the social systems of the time it would not have been at all unusual for tribes in Britain to have offered allegiance to Belgic high kings. The obligations thus entailed would have been met by providing warriors in time of need and in gift exchange involving, among other things, the passing of high-value coins among élites (Nash 1984).

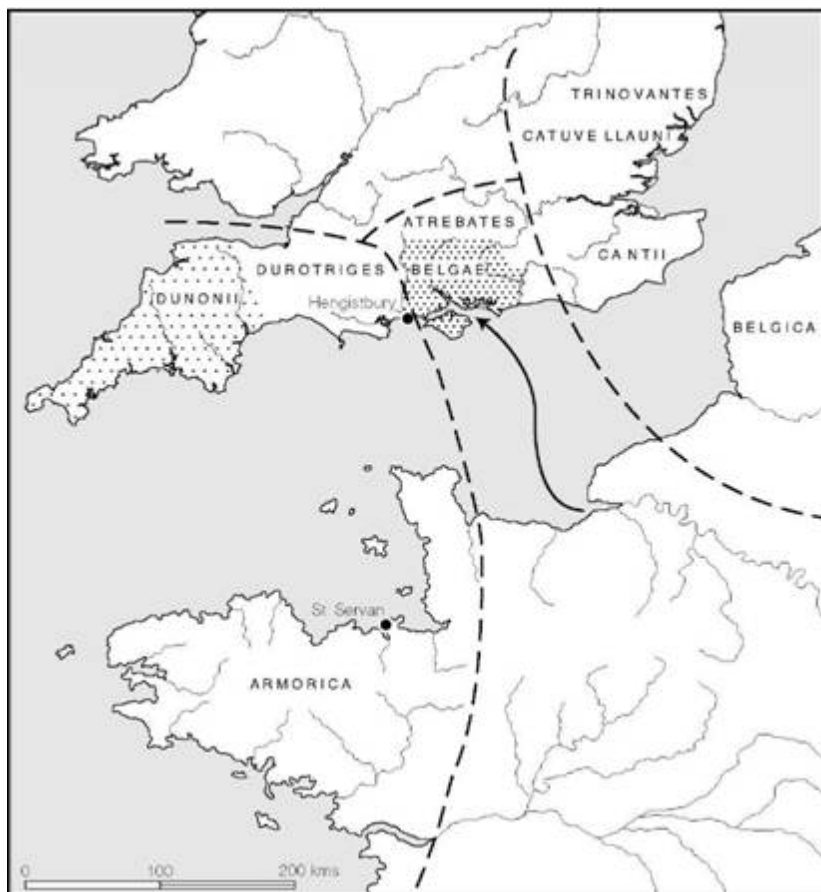


Figure 6.1 The location of the Belgae (source: Cunliffe 1988a).

It is in this context of social intercourse that we might best explain the earliest imported Gallo-Belgic coins (Figures 6.2–6.5). The two earliest issues, the *Large Flan type* of the Ambiani and the *Defaced Die type* possibly of the Caletes (i.e. Gallo-Belgic A and B in Allen’s nomenclature) were minted in Gaul in the last thirty years of the second century BC and could have reached Britain at this time or later. These were followed by four later types: the *Abstract Design type* (Gallo-Belgic C) which may have been minted by the Suessiones; the

Gallic War types (Gallo-Belgic E) which began minting about 60 BC and circulated in vast numbers on both sides of the Channel, presumably to finance the war against Caesar; the *Triple Tailed Horse type* (Gallo-Belgic F) minted by the Suessiones about 60 BC and appearing in Britain in only small numbers; and a quarter stater, the *Geometric type* (Gallo-Belgic D), which was probably current in Britain between 80 and 60 BC.

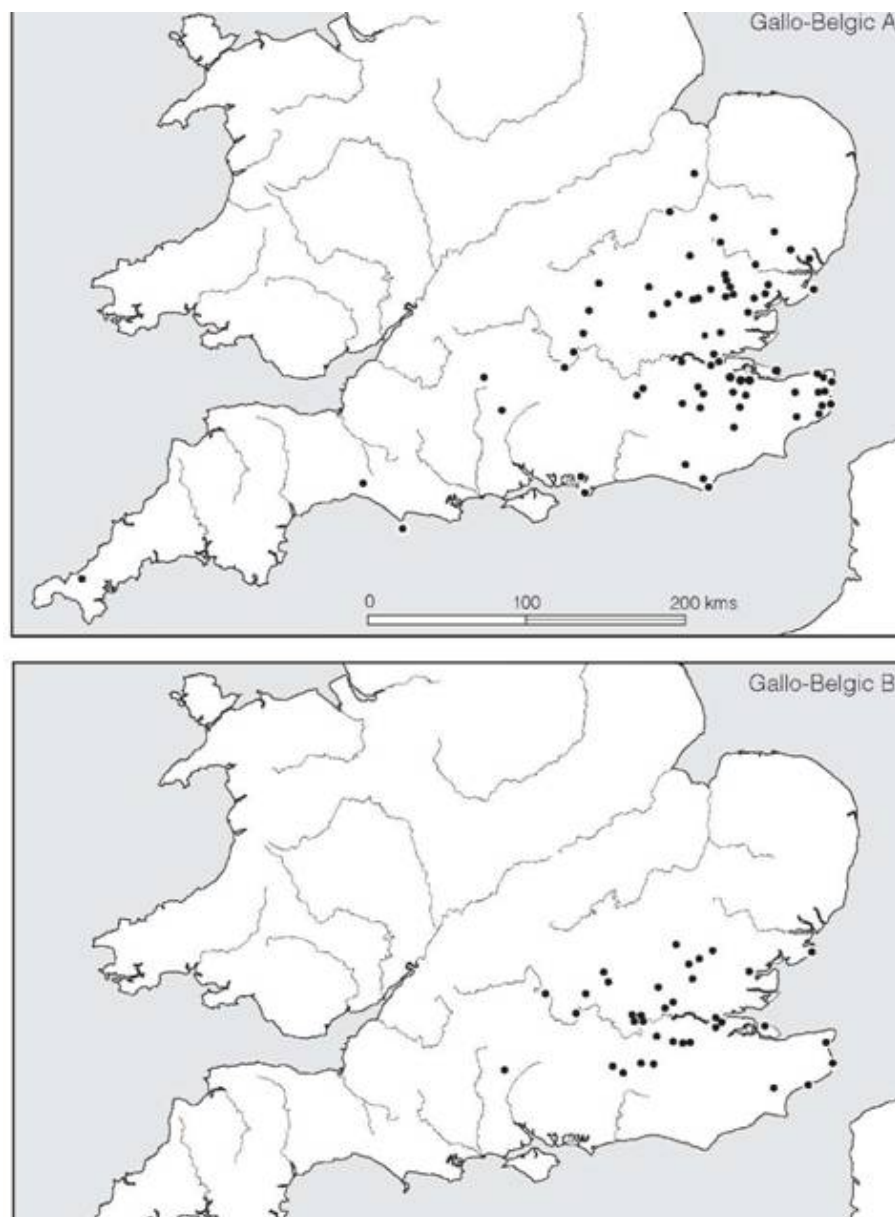


Figure 6.2 Distribution of Gallo-Belgic A and B coins (source: CCI 2003).

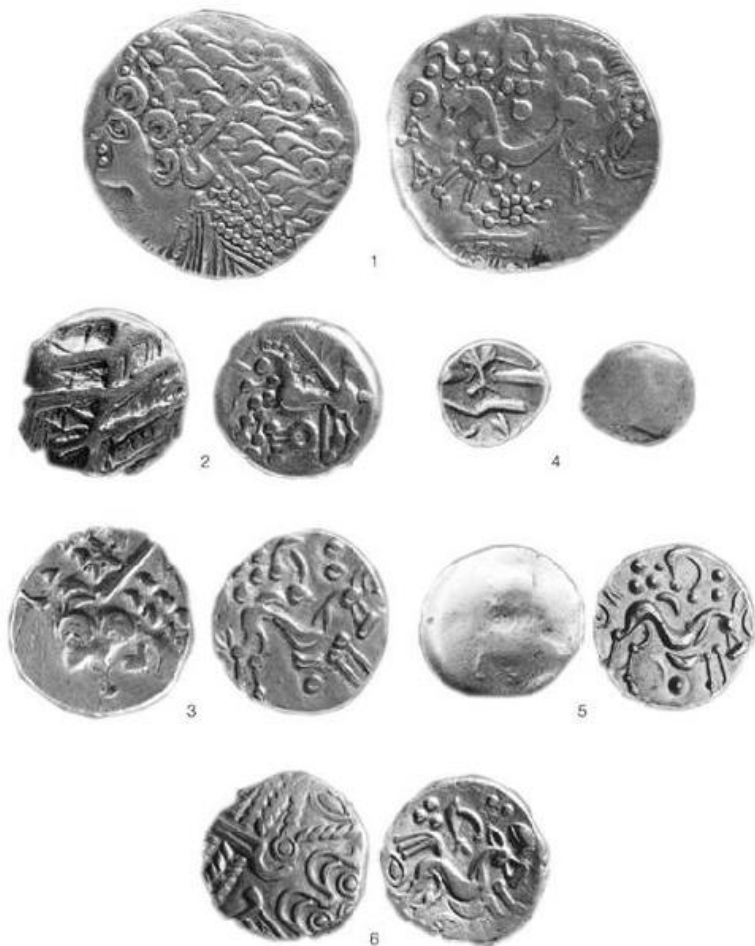


Figure 6.3 Gallo-Belgic coins: 1 Gallo-Belgic A; 2 Gallo-Belgic B; 3 Gallo-Belgic C; 4 Gallo-Belgic D; 5 Gallo-Belgic E; 6 Gallo-Belgic F; twice actual size (photographs: Institute of Archaeology, Oxford).

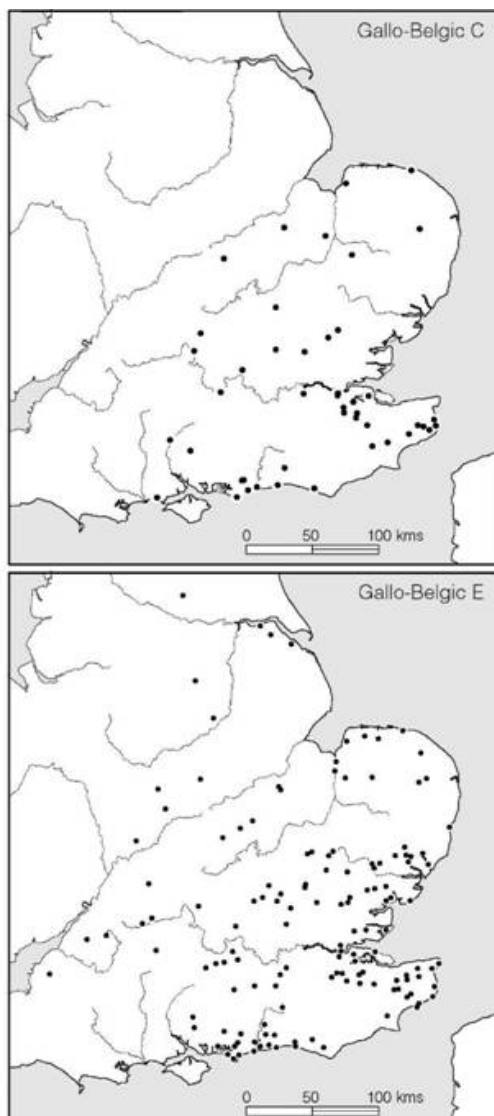


Figure 6.4 Distribution of Gallo-Belgic C and Gallo-Belgic E coins (source: CCI 2003).

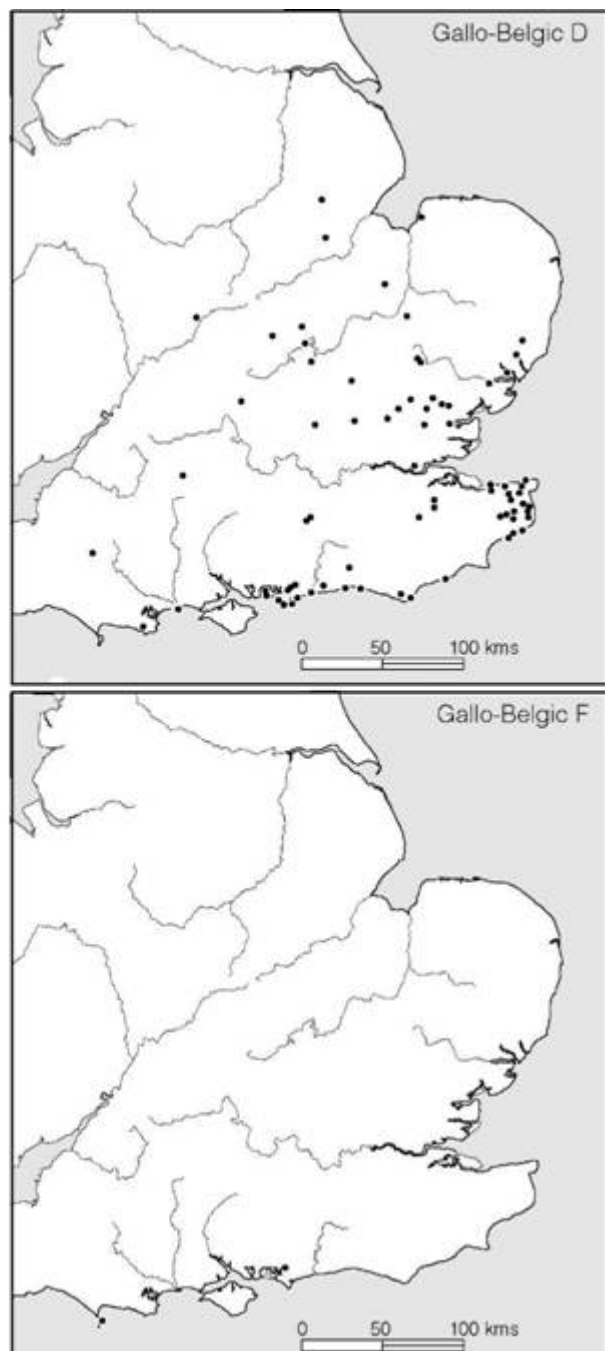


Figure 6.5 *Distribution of Gallo-Belgic D and F coins (source: CCI 2003).*

The distribution maps will give some idea of the spatial extent and density of the individual issues in Britain. What stands out in

particular is the concentration in the Thames region and in Kent with a scatter along the Sussex coast and northwards into Essex and Hertfordshire. Bearing in mind the potential complex history of each coin, from the time it reached Britain until the moment it was archaeologically recorded, it would be unwise to base too detailed an argument on present distribution, particularly since many of the issues may have been in circulation for decades before being finally lost or buried. The patterns recorded archaeologically reflect the vagaries of use, deposition and rediscovery after a long and no doubt complex history. Even so the Thames valley/Kent/Essex distribution is so dominant throughout as to suggest a distinct zone of early coin circulation.

To what extent it is legitimate to construct a 'protohistory' on the basis of these early Gallo-Belgic imports is debatable. The 'successive waves' theory (as exemplified by Hawkes (1968) and in a modified form by Rodwell (1976)) is no longer acceptable, but it would be legitimate to see in the distributions of the Large Flan and Defaced Die types (i.e. Gallo-Belgic A and B), emanating from the Ambiani and Caletes in the Somme valley and Belgic coastal zone, a vestige of a folk movement. Such a view could be reconciled with the theory propounded above, of a Belgic incursion into the Solent region, by supposing that in the decades around 130–100 BC many bands of settlers arrived on the British shores but only the Solent group remained ethnically identifiable in the eyes of the later Roman geographers. The alternative view, that the early Gallo-Belgic coins simply reflect diplomatic links, is equally plausible. The evidence is such that there can be no certainty.

Two of the later Gallo-Belgic imports, the Abstract Design type (Gallo-Belgic C) and the Triple Tailed Horse type (Gallo-Belgic F), which are both thought to have been issued by the Suesiones, may reflect gifts distributed to British leaders during the overlordship of Diviciacus, King of the Suessiones. The fact that the Triple Tailed Horse type, though excessively rare in Britain, was chosen as the prototype for several of the native British coinages underlines its symbolic importance in the political developments of the time.

The earliest of the British-minted coinages was a cast high-tin bronze issue found in great numbers in Kent and the Lower Thames valley and East Sussex. These coins, originally called 'potins' and now known as *Kentish Cast Bronzes*, were copied from Masilliot prototypes, a few of which arrived in east Kent possibly as the result of long-distance trade along the Atlantic route. Dating cannot be precise but the series is now thought to have begun in the late second century and to have continued to develop until a decade or two after the Gallic War (Haselgrove 1988). The early appearance of low-

denomination coinage in just the region where the high-value Gallo-Belgic imports are distributed is of considerable interest, for there can be little doubt that they were minted to facilitate exchange within the early monetary system. Whether or not this implies the emergence of a developing market economy is a moot point, but when seen against the background of the development of oppida in the same region (pp. 402–6) it is difficult to resist the view that major developments in trade and exchange were now under way. The coincidence of the distribution of the early potin and the arc-decorated pottery of the Mucking–Crayford and Late Caburn–Saltdean styles is a strong indication that the maritime regions of the south-east remained in close contact, presumably by means of coastal shipping.

In the two decades before the outbreak of the Gallic War, several of the British tribes began to strike their own coinages mostly based on Gallo-Belgic C issues (Figure 6.6). Although numbers are not particularly great it is possible to show that the different types of early British coins tend to be restricted to distinct, but broadly defined, territories which reflect quite closely the ceramic zones of the Middle–Late Iron Age. The development of these early regional types can be recognized into the 40s and 30s of the first century, by which time many issuing authorities were adding inscriptions to the coins identifying rulers and sometimes the places where the coins were minted. Thereafter it is possible to trace the succession up to the time of the Roman invasion of AD 43, after which the tribal entities can be positively named and quite tightly defined geographically. Reviewing the evidence overall, it is a reasonable supposition that the tribes known to us at the time of the Claudian invasion can be traced back as geo-political entities to the Middle Iron Age, and in some areas possibly even earlier, though there must have been many boundary adjustments over time. At what stage it is justifiable to use the later tribal names it is very difficult to say. It could be argued that the appearance of the first British coins is an appropriate moment (as Van Arsdell 1989) but other commentators would prefer not to begin until inscribed issues begin in the post-Gallic War period. Some of these territorial issues will be explored further below (chapter 21).

The earliest British coins to appear around 70 BC were struck in central southern Britain, south of the Thames, in the area later defined as Atrebatia. These were soon followed by an issue of staters found concentrated in Dorset, which lie at the beginning of the coinage of the Durotriges. By about 60 BC the regions between the Thames and the Humber/Trent were issuing distinctive series geographically divisible into three zones which can be identified with the tribal territories of the Trinovantes/Catuvellauni, the Iceni and the Corieltaui. In Kent the various communities seem to have been

content to use the large quantities of Gallo-Belgic staters and locally produced potin already circulating within the territory. The early British staters were all minted to match the weight standard of the pre-war Gallo-Belgic issues, no doubt to facilitate exchange between regions. The appearance at this time of quarter-staters in the Hampshire–Sussex region, in Dorset and in Kent would have further eased exchanges across tribal boundaries.

Caesar's campaigns in Gaul, beginning in 58 BC, caused widespread social and economic disruption not only among the Gaulish tribes but in Britain as well. His campaign against the Armorican tribes in 57 BC dislocated the Atlantic trading systems and brought the flow of Mediterranean imports into the Hengistbury region almost to an end, while his attempted subjugation of Belgica must have created turmoil in south-eastern Britain requiring the intervention of British mercenaries on the side of their Belgic allies. These events are reflected in the British coinage of the early war years.

The most dramatic effect was the flow of large quantities of gold into Britain in the form of Gallo-Belgic E staters which are thought to have been minted to finance the Gallic War and may therefore have been payment for mercenary services. It seems likely that this was the source of the gold used by the Atrebates to mint their own very considerable gold series (Atrebatian B and C). The neighbouring Durotriges, however, seem to have run out of gold and their stater series became increasingly debased (Durotrigan C and D); and after the war gold disappeared from the area altogether.

This contrast between the Atrebates and Durotriges is particularly interesting. In part at least it must be due to the breakdown of the Atlantic trade network but there may be other factors at work. Caesar records that before his invasion of Britain in 55 BC he sent over a Gaulish chieftain, Commius, to encourage certain of the British tribes to ally themselves with Rome (*BG* IV 21). It would not be unreasonable for these efforts to be concentrated in central southern Britain where the tribes could provide a buffer between the hostile Durotriges, whose long-established Armorican allies had been decimated, and the tribes of the south-east where Caesar was proposing to land. That five years or so later Commius fled to the same area adds some support to this view. It may be, then, in this context of Roman diplomacy that gold reached the Atrebates.

The period from c. 120 to 60 BC was one of rapid change for the tribes of the south-eastern part of Britain. Undreamed of trading possibilities were opening up with distant Mediterranean systems, migrating bands were arriving, and the proximity of Caesar in Gaul was creating a turmoil of diplomatic activity and mercenary movements. These various stimuli were spread unevenly in time and

space but their cumulative effect was to cause such disruption that the socio-economic systems established in the third and second centuries BC became destabilized and collapsed. Signs of this dislocation can be most clearly seen in the last stages of hillfort development.



Figure 6.6 Early British coins: 1 Cantii 'potin'; 2 Atrebates; 3 Trinovantes/Catuvellauni; 4 Icenii; 5 Corieltauvi; 6 Durotriges; twice actual size (photographs: Institute of Archaeology, Oxford).

At Danebury, Hants, in the heart of Wessex, the east entrance was massively defended some time towards 100 BC with a gate fronted by

two curved inner hornworks, creating a flint-walled approaching corridor 46 m long and 6 m wide. To reach the gate any attacker would have had to run the gauntlet while defenders on the north inner hornwork could have rained down volleys of slingstones (Figure 6.7). The inner hornworks were further defended by two claw-like outer hornworks in the centre of which was a dual-portal outer gate. The entire complex was brilliantly designed so that every part was clearly visible from the sling platform on the end of the north inner hornwork and all lay within the slingers' range of 60 m. There can be little doubt that the concept was purely military. Some indication of the date is given by the discovery of a gold-plated Gallo-Belgic C coin from the top of the primary silt of the outer hornwork ditch. The coin was in a fresh condition and is hardly likely to have been dropped much after 70 BC. Judging by the degree of silting beneath it, a construction date of c. 100 BC would seem reasonable.

The eastern entrance of Maiden Castle was treated in an even more impressive way (see Figure 15.6, p. 358). After the initial phase of multivallation (phase III), the entire approach was remodelled (phase IV) with a complex of overlapping earthworks designed to create a circuitous approach protected by carefully sited platforms for slingers. The gates themselves (two separate gates) were set in long stone-walled corridors, close to one of which was a hoard of 22,000 slingstones. Dating is not direct but depends upon the total absence of coins. Since Durotrigan coins began to be minted in c. 65 BC, phase IV is likely to pre-date this period and may well have begun about 100 BC.

Other forts in the area, where more limited excavation has taken place, frequently show late entrance modifications, invariably giving rise to a long corridor approach. St Catharine's Hill, Winchester, can be interpreted in this way. So too can the Caburn, the Trundle, Torberry, Bredon and, further afield, the forts of the Welsh borderland and north Wales.

We have evidence, then, that over much of the south and west of Britain the defences of hill-forts were improved by the construction of either long corridor entrances or complex outworks or both. Wherever dating evidence is available, these refurbishings can be seen to belong late in the period of the saucepan pot continuum, broadly second to first centuries, and there are indications from some sites that the construction date lies at about 100 BC or a little before. It must be stressed that the techniques involved in the rebuildings were not alien to the local traditions. Multivallation and simple forms of hornworks already existed in the south-west, and the earlier gate developments were moving towards the inturned or corridor form. Far more significant is the fact that it was always long-established sites that

were brought into defensive order. While the nature of the evidence so far outlined does not allow us to say that all the rebuildings were local responses to the same stimulus, it does point to a phase of intense defensive activity spread over a few decades at the most.

Evidence of defence prompts us to look for evidence of attack. It can indeed be found. At Worlebury and Bredon war cemeteries of mutilated bodies have been discovered close to the entrances; at Danebury the gate was destroyed by fire; while at Torberry the dry-stone walls flanking the entrances were thrown down deliberately, filling the hollowed roadway. These acts took place while saucepan pots were in use and must therefore reflect intertribal warfare or raiding, probably within the late second or the first half of the first century BC. It can be argued, then, that certain parts of Britain offer evidence of stress in the period before Caesar's invasions. Distributions are informative. The new defensive activities spread along the South Downs, the Wessex chalklands, the Upper Thames and the Cotswolds and into the south-west and the Welsh border areas – a distribution almost exactly complementary to the contemporary coinage distributions of Gallo-Belgic A, B and C, which cover the North Downs and North Weald, the Lower Thames, Essex and parts of Suffolk, spreading up to the Chilterns. While this may be a coincidence, it could be that we are seeing here a Thames-centred core territory undergoing rapid socio-economic development in the early years of the first century BC with the emergence of a money economy, surrounded by a periphery where the old social system was coming under excessive stress. By the 70s and 60s, however, substantial parts of that periphery had begun to adapt to the new economic reality by adopting their own coinages compatible with that of the core. In the centre-south the effects of the Atlantic trading system linking to Armorica and beyond are likely to have exacerbated the collapse of the old order.



Figure 6.7 *The east entrance of the hillfort at Danebury, Hants, taken from position of the final burnt gate looking outwards along the approach corridor (photograph: Danebury Trust).*

The campaigns of Julius Caesar, 55 and 54 BC

In 55 BC Britain was still very much of an unknown quantity to the Roman world, and even after interviewing traders Caesar was able to

learn little about it. To provide the necessary intelligence he sent a warship commanded by Volusenus on a reconnaissance mission with orders to find out as much as possible and return quickly. Meanwhile he set about preparing a fleet based upon the warships used the previous summer against the Veneti. Inevitably the Britons got wind of the preparations and sent envoys to offer hostages and thereby allegiance. Caesar's reaction was to extract promises of good behaviour and send them home, accompanied by Commius, a king of the Gaulish Atrebates who, Caesar tells us, was greatly respected in Britain. As we have seen, his task was to warn the British leaders of the impending invasion and to persuade as many as possible to seek allegiance with Rome. The move was ill-judged, however, and Commius was soon taken prisoner, only to be returned with suitable contrite regrets after Caesar had landed.

Eventually the expedition set sail for Britain in eighty transports carrying the two legions and another eighteen for the cavalry, accompanied by a large number of warships (Hawkes 1977). The landing was opposed and difficult, not least because the Roman cavalry failed to arrive, but eventually a foothold was obtained and the army moved forward. Envoys were sent by the British chieftains and a temporary peace ensued, but was soon broken by the Britons when the Romans appeared to be in difficulty. Only after several indecisive engagements was Caesar able to extricate himself and sail back to the relative safety of Gaul, taking with him a large number of British hostages.

The campaign of 54 BC was more massively staged: over 800 ships were involved, transporting an army of five legions and 2,000 cavalry. The campaign was more extended than in the previous year and Caesar's account is more informative (Black 1990b). In addition to details of the actual fighting, Caesar has much to say about the politico-military situation in Britain. Before the invasions a powerful local king, Cassivellaunus, whose territory appears to have lain to the north of the Thames, had been warring with neighbouring tribes. He had killed the King of the Trinovantes and had driven out his son Mandubracius, who fled to Caesar in Gaul. Yet as soon as the Roman threat appeared, personal animosities were forgotten and Cassivellaunus was elected the overall war leader of the resistance, commanding a vast confederate army. Even so, through sheer force of arms, Caesar managed to cut his way through Kent, crossed the Thames and took the battle into Cassivellaunus' kingdom. Gradually the British resistance crumbled and Cassivellaunus was reduced to guerrilla tactics and a scorched-earth policy. With the growing inevitability of Roman success, the unstable British alliance gradually broke up, the Trinovantes sending envoys to Caesar and promising to

surrender if Mandubracius was returned and the tribe protected against Cassivellaunus. The immediate success of these negotiations brought over other tribes, including the Cenimagni, Segontiaci, Aulacites, Bibroci and Cassi (whose whereabouts and subsequent histories are unknown); Caesar also obtained information leading to the location of Cassivellaunus' stronghold.

The last stages could now be fought out. As Caesar was attacking the oppidum, Cassivellaunus rushed orders to the people of Kent ordering the four kings of the region, Cingetorix, Carvilius, Taximagulus and Segovax, to launch a surprise swoop on Caesar's naval base. The plan was sound but the attack failed and with it the British resistance. Cassivellaunus, using Commius as an intermediary, was forced to sue for peace, which Caesar granted (no doubt gladly) in return for hostages and the assurance of an annual tribute to Rome, and on the understanding that Cassivellaunus should not molest Mandubracius or the Trinovantes. The arrangements having been settled, Caesar departed.

The episode is invaluable for the light it throws on the British scene. The country was split into innumerable tribal groups in conflict with each other, and while in matters of national emergency a single war leader would be elected, old rivalries could lead to eventual betrayal. This is precisely the kind of picture one would expect after reviewing the coin evidence of the previous half-century; Caesar, however, provides us with names, motives and a story-line. The proximity of Rome introduces a new factor into British protohistory: tribes in conflict could now ally themselves with Rome, as the Trinovantes had done, using the threat of Roman protection as a significant bargaining counter. Moreover, Roman life and luxury offered a new outlet for those who desired to enhance their own prestige. Thus political and economic ties with the Continent increased and British history takes on a new clarity.

It is surprising that after so many years of archaeological research no direct trace of Caesar's campaigns have been found. It has, however, been suggested that the invasion scare may have caused the sudden deposition of a number of hoards (Rodwell 1976, 198–203). In all, twelve can be shown to be roughly contemporary with Caesar's landing, many of them lying in Kent and Essex – the territory through which Caesar campaigned (Figure 6.8). Others, from further afield, such as coin hoards from Carn Brea and Grimsby and the metalwork hoards from Ulceby and Snettisham, could be explained as flight hoards' deposited by those escaping to safety from Caesar's advance. The hypothesis is at least plausible.

From first-hand accounts of Caesar's battles we learn much of British fighting tactics. They possessed three forces: infantry, cavalry

and charioteers, who seldom fought in close formation but usually attacked in open order interspersed with groups of reserves to cover the retreat or to relieve the fighters when they began to tire. Caesar found that fighting such a foe was difficult. Even greater problems were posed by the natives' use of chariots, of which Cassivellaunus is said to have had 4,000 under his control. Evidently this kind of warfare was new to Caesar. He describes how the Britons drove about wildly to create a din and to inspire fear while throwing their javelins at the enemy. They would then drive out through their own cavalry and jump down to engage the enemy on foot while the charioteers retired a short way, positioning themselves so as to be able to swoop in and rescue their masters if required. 'They combine', said Caesar, 'the mobility of cavalry with the staying power of infantry.' He goes on to describe how by daily training they became highly skilled – able to drive up steep inclines with horses at full gallop, checking and turning with ease. They could also run out along the chariot pole, stand on the yoke and get back into the vehicle with great speed. Altogether Caesar was impressed. But even so, the British defence could not stand up to Roman attack. Like the Celtic personality, it was daring, fierce and brave but lacked staying power. It was impetuous and instinctive rather than considered. When faced with the grinding solidarity of the Roman military machine, the British resistance melted into the forests to engage in guerrilla warfare. Even the two hillforts which Caesar mentions, possibly Bigbury in Kent and Wheathampstead in Hertfordshire, were overrun by the army without much difficulty. British fighting techniques were geared far more closely to the rapid raids of intertribal fighting (as indeed were the defences of the hillforts) than to the relentless force of organized military imperialism.

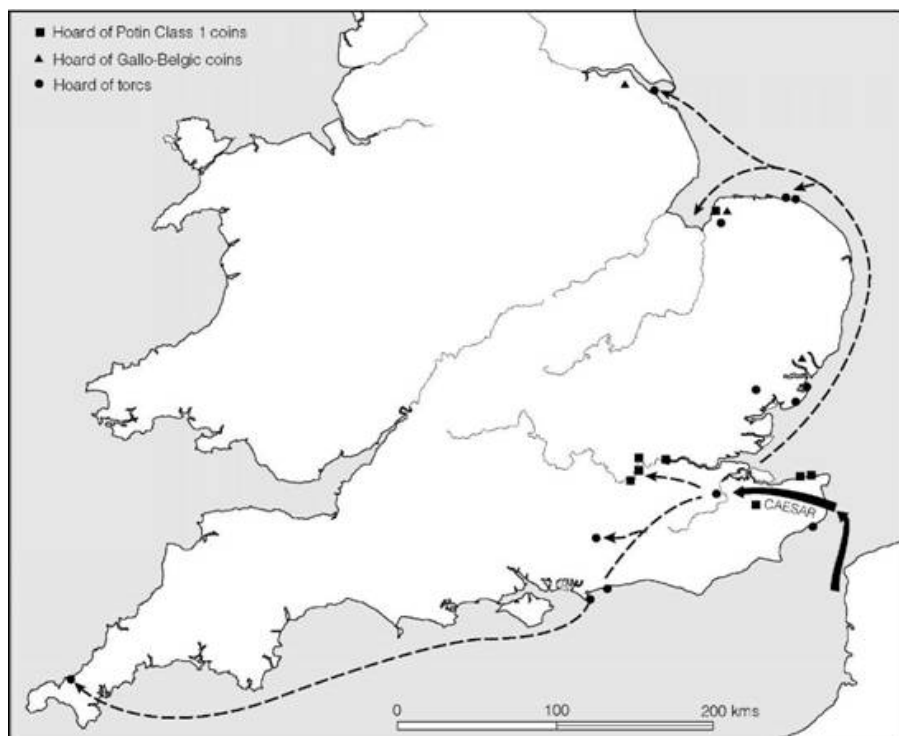


Figure 6.8 Hoards of the Caesarian period (source: Rodwell 1976).

The emergence of tribal kingdoms, 54–10 BC

The Caesarian invasion was a traumatic time for the British tribes of the south-east. Suddenly the might of Rome had become a reality. Not only were the tribal leaders made all too aware of the political significance of friendship with Rome as a totally new factor in their intertribal dealings, but now that Gaul was notionally a Roman preserve the basis of cross-Channel trading had to be restructured. In the Roman mind the tribes of the south-east who had submitted to Caesar and had entered into treaty relationships with Rome would have been regarded as part of the Roman sphere in much the same way as the tribes of Gaul. This is indeed implied by Horace in his poem *Epode* (VII, 7–8). The Channel was merely a tiresome irrelevance. It is not surprising therefore that in the immediate post-Caesarian period south-eastern Britain and northern Gaul came to share a broadly similar culture, reflected in styles of pottery and modes of burial, bound together by trading networks consumer-led by the demands of Rome. The native aristocracies in both areas demonstrated status by manipulating Roman luxury goods – frequently the accoutrements of the wine-drinking ritual – which were

buried with the nobility. In Britain the resulting manifestation is referred to as the Aylesford–Swarling culture and will be considered in more detail in chapter 7.

All the time that Rome was prepared to accept the rather tenuous Caesarian political settlement a degree of stability could be maintained, though the fact that Octavian (later Augustus) visited Gaul in 34 BC with the idea of continuing Caesar's conquest of Britain implies that the central authorities were keeping the situation under review (Dio Cassius XLIX, 38, 2). Nothing came of this, but a few years later, in 27 BC, Augustus set out to lead an expedition to Britain but was once again detained in Gaul. In any event we are told 'the Britons seemed likely to make terms with him' (LIII, 22, 5). By the next year, however, negotiations had broken down – the Britons 'would not come to terms'. These passages are not without their problems, but the implication would seem to be that the treaties negotiated by Caesar with the British tribes had fallen into abeyance after twenty years, and Augustus at first thought to reconstitute them by force of arms or diplomacy but failed to do so and lost interest when other more pressing commitments demanded his attention (Stevens 1951). Thereafter, as we shall see, a desultory interest was maintained in British affairs from a distance.

The political development of south-eastern Britain between the campaigns of Caesar and the conquest of Claudius, beginning in AD 43, can to some extent be reconstructed from the study of British coinage. The coins themselves are tangible symbols of authority and, suitably interpreted, can provide valuable insights into dynastic developments, spheres of influence and aspirations of ethnicity. Moreover, changes of weight and of metal content have direct chronological and economic implications allowing roughly dated sequences to be constructed and questions of economic power to be approached.

Standing back from the confusing detail of coin types and distributions it is possible to order the material into several broad groupings which remain relevant for the ninety years or so before the Claudian conquest. At the highest remove we can distinguish between the *core region* of south-eastern Britain and the *peripheral tribes* – the Durotriges, Dobunni, Corieltauvi and Iceni. The core region can be seen to fall into two broad tribal regions: the Atrebates and the Cantii south of the Thames and the Trinovantes/Catuvellauni to the north. These two broad groupings have their origins in the pre-Caesarian reformations and remain a significant geo-political divide influencing the subsequent administrative structure of the Roman province.

The effects of the Gallic War on the coinage of Britain were twofold: a progressive reduction in the weight of staters and the introduction of

silver coinages. The weight reduction ran in parallel with the decline in weight of Gallo-Belgic E coins from 6.35 to 5.80 grams during the course of the war. As new and progressively lighter coins flooded into Britain so the British mints followed, the latest and most dramatic weight reductions being accompanied by changes of style signifying lower value. The new stater issued by the Trinovantes/Catuvellauni, while basing its design on the traditional Triple Tailed Horse type, adopted a series of design elements copied from contemporary Roman denarii. This striking innovation might well have been to symbolize their treaty relationship with Caesar. The adoption of silver, some of the designs of which were also taken from denarii, is likely to have had more complex causes. The most significant of these was probably the desire to match, for reasons of easy exchange, the new silver issues being struck by the neighbouring Gallic tribes. By the end of the war the Trinovantes/Catuvellauni, Atrebates, Icenii and Corieltauvi were all striking silver alongside their gold (Figure 6.9).

One significant political event at the end of the war was the flight to Britain of Commius and his followers. Commius, a member of the Gallo-Belgic Atrebatian aristocracy, had been a trusted supporter of Caesar's and had mediated on behalf of Rome during the British campaigns. He had returned to Gaul in the late summer of 54 BC but two years later made a dramatic volte-face by supporting Vercingetorix, the leader of the Gallic rebellion. When the revolt failed and Vercingetorix surrendered Commius became a fugitive. He was hunted down and almost murdered by the Roman authorities but managed to escape. Eventually, in about 50 BC, he fled to Britain to join his people already settled here. He probably landed somewhere in the Solent region and eventually set up a kingdom in northern Hampshire and Berkshire based on *Calleva* (Silchester). Once the new dynasty was established the local abstract coinage was modified by adding the name of Commius on the reverse. A detailed study of these early issues has suggested that there may have been two rulers of that name, the original Commius (Commius I) whose coinage was limited, and a successor, Commius II, who on some issues styled himself COM COMMIIOS and began minting a series of issues about 30 BC. If this proves to be so then it is possible that Commius II was the son of the renegade. Three subsequent rulers, Tincomarus (originally referred to as Tincommius), Eppillus and Verica, all claimed a filial relationship, though this may have had more to do with attempts to legitimize their overlordship than a record of direct genetic descent.

In the period between Caesar's campaigns and the interest shown in Britain by Augustus on a number of occasions before about 30 BC, the rapidly developing coinage allows us to trace the emergence of several dynasties, while the distribution patterns created by coin finds provide

both an indication of territorial boundaries and some insight into the power struggles of the time.

North of the Thames two new coin types appeared about 45 BC; both were light-weight versions of the earlier Wadden Chase series and were in circulation around the periphery of the Trinovantian core territory where a late version of the Wadden Chase type continued in use. These light-weight peripheral coinages may have been deliberately minted for exchange purposes beyond the tribal boundaries. Significantly, however, they formed the prototypes from which the first dynastic coinages of the Trinovantes/Catuvellauni were derived. The first was of Addedomarus, who issued coins from about 40 BC for about ten years, and these were replaced by those of the Essex Dubnovellaunus in the period from roughly 30 to 25 BC ('Essex' to distinguish him from the king of the same name who issued coins in Kent, but see p. 145).

To the south the coins of Commius continued to circulate in Atrebatian territory but the situation in Kent was altogether more complex. After about 50 BC a series of staters and their quarter staters were issued, leading to the first dynastic issue, c. 35 BC, inscribed with the letters IVII, but within five years that had been replaced with issues of the Kentish Dubnovellaunus which continued until about 10 BC. The Kentish cast bronze series ('potins') which had begun about 130 BC came to an end at about the time that the first inscribed coins began.



Figure 6.9 Coins of the early British dynasties: 1 Commius (Atrebat); 2 Addedomaros (Trinovantes/ Catuvellauni); 3 Dubnovellaunus (Canti); 4 Bodvoc (Dobunni); 5 Anted (Iceni); 6 AVN AST (Corieltavi); twice actual size (photographs: Institute of Archaeology, Oxford).

In the peripheral zone the four tribal coinages developed individually in a manner suggestive of a considerable variation in tribal fortunes. The Iceni, whose territory lay in East Anglia to the north, seem to have experienced economic or political uncertainty. Their main gold issue had become very debased in the decade after the war. About 45 BC standards were restored with a new issue but it

appears to have been short-lived and by about 40 BC local production ceased, its place being taken by the Trinovantian staters, first of Addedomaros and later of Dubnovel-launus. While this could suggest political dominance by the Trinovantes, it need imply little more than the acceptance, by the Iceni, of one element of their neighbours' value systems. The fact that the Iceni now issued their own silver modelled on that of their northern neighbours the Corieltavi hints at their continued political independence.

The Durotriges, who had run out of gold during the war, struck only silver coins, which became gradually debased over the next twenty years until, about 30 BC, the issues were so low in silver that they are best considered as bronze. Their neighbours, the Dobunni, seem to have made a hesitating start to issuing coins. Throughout the war and for some time after they were content to use the same general type of uninscribed coinage as the Atrebates, though with a treelike symbol on the reverse. Some time around 30 BC the first inscribed gold was issued, associated with silver units. Two names appear at this time, Corio whose coins occur across the whole territory and Bodvoc whose issues are found to concentrate in the north. The issues seem to be broadly contemporary and may therefore indicate two distinct polities. Some support for this is provided by one of the silver issues of Bodvoc which is based on a coin of the Catuvel-launian leader, Tasciovanus, suggesting that some sort of political alliance may have been established. The Corieltavi continued issuing gold in a complex and highly original series (Corieltavi B-H) until the first dynastic issue appeared towards the end of the first century BC. Their silver series began about 45 with a copy of a Roman denarius.

The two decades from 30 to 10 BC were, for Gaul, a period of consolidation during which time Augustus had taken the shattered country and had moulded it into a fully functioning province of the Roman empire. New towns were being built and major road systems were laid out, and a census had been taken allowing the new provincials to be taxed in accordance with Roman practice. The culmination of this process of integration was the dedication in 10 BC of the great altar at Lyons to Rome and Augustus. From now on, symbolically at least, Gaul was pacified and the armies in the west could be fully deployed advancing into Germany.

For Britain this meant a period of increasing isolation from their Gaulish kinsmen as the old systems of exchange, articulated between the native élites on both sides of the Channel, were replaced by direct contact with Roman traders making use of the newly installed road system. No doubt diplomatic exchanges between Rome and the native British chieftains continued, consolidating old allegiances and creating new ones. In about 15 BC Horace could list the Britons among those

who 'admired' or 'heard' Augustus (Ode IV 14, 41–52), implying at the very least a stable treaty relationship. Judging from the distribution of Italian luxury goods in Britain the principal focus of Roman goodwill continued to be the Trinovantes/Catuvellauni (pp. 481–3).

The Trinovantian ruler Dubnovellaunus (Essex) was succeeded in about 25 BC by Tasciovanus, who issued an elaborate series of coins until about 10 BC. His gold staters were conservative in style, the only significant innovation being the addition of the title *rix* – 'high king' to his name – the first time in Britain that a claim to kingship is recorded. The parallel bronze and silver coinages were far more varied, and frequently copied images from Roman coinage.

Tasciovanus was also the first ruler to record the names of towns on his coins – presumably the places where the mints were located. VER (Verulamium) appeared first, to be followed by CAM (Camulodunum).

We have seen that from the time of Addedomaros (c. 40–30 BC) the Iceni were content to use the gold of their southern neighbours while issuing their own silver based on that of the Corieltaui. This situation continued throughout the reign of Tasciovanus, the only difference being that the Icenian silver gradually became more original, and some time about 25 BC an issue inscribed CAN DVRO appeared, the significance of which is not immediately apparent.

To the south of the Thames the issues of Commius ceased about 20 BC to be replaced with those of Tincommius who claimed to be a son of Commius. The distribution of his output, both gold and silver, seems to have remained restricted to Atrebatian territory centred on Hampshire and Sussex, implying a degree of continued isolation following the war. Much the same can be said of the Cantii, who minted their own distinctive coinage in gold, silver and bronze struck under the name of Dubnovellaunus. Since these issues are stylistically very different from those of the Dubnovellaunus, who was minting in Essex from c. 30 to 25 BC there is no need to regard them as the products of one person. The possibility remains, however, that there may have been only one Dubnovellaunus who at first had overlordship of both Essex and Kent and later, after about 25 BC, lost control of Essex. The fact that the two series were stylistically different is not a positive argument against such an interpretation, since overlordship need require little more than the explicit statement of the fact that Dubnovellaunus was legitimizing coin production. The problem is one without positive solution.

The coinage of the peripheral tribes continued to follow tendencies established in the immediate post-war period: the Durotriges issued only an impoverished bronze series; the Dobunni maintained a silver series with sporadic gold issues inscribed with the names Corio and Bodvoc; while the Corieltaui continued to mint their traditional

The period of disruption, c. 10 BC–c. AD 10

The individual British coin series established in the post-war years developed with little disruption in each of the seven tribal areas until about 10 BC, but there then followed a period of disruption and discontinuity which Van Arsdell (1989) refers to as the ‘interregnum’. It was during this time that two of the British leaders, Tincomaros and Dubnovellaunus, fled to Rome to put themselves under the protection of Augustus. Their names appear on the *Monumentum Ancyranum*, which is thought to be not later than AD 14. The coin evidence suggests that this flight may have been about AD 10. It was at about this time that Strabo could report that ‘certain of the British dynasts have obtained the friendship of Caesar Augustus by embassies and courtesies and set up offerings in the Capitol’ (IV, 5, 3). While this may reflect a slightly earlier situation, it could represent a flurry of diplomatic activity on the part of aspiring British overlords vying with each other to win the support of Rome in their attempts to legitimize their territorial claims at the outset of the ‘interregnum’. The chronology, however, is too imprecise for certainty.

The causes of the apparent disruption remain unknown. One contributory factor could have been the effects of the Roman advance into Germany which coincided with this period, but why this should have affected the British tribes is difficult to understand unless destabilization was a deliberate part of Roman policy to keep a potentially troublesome flank occupied with its own problems. Such a suggestion may seem a trifle overcomplex. A more likely reason is internal strife consequent upon the death of Tasciovanus, who had ruled north of the Thames for about fifteen years. This would appear to be the implication of the Trinovantian/Catuvellaunian coinage of the period. Four new names appear: SEGO, RUIIS, DIAS and ANDOCO, the first three coupled with the name of Tasciovanus possibly in an attempt to claim legitimacy. The Sego and Andoco coinage was issued in gold, silver and bronze though there was a considerable weight reduction of the stater from 5.60 to 5.40 grams. Dias, who followed, issued no gold at all, while the last of the name, Rues, appears only on bronze. If the sequence has been correctly interpreted the implication would seem to be of a progressive economic crisis. The Iceni now took a more independent line, issuing their own silver and a little gold inscribed with the name Anted.

The tribes to the south of the Thames seem to have faced some disruption during this period. That two of the rulers, Tincomaros and Dubnovellaunus, appear to have fled to Rome to the protection of the

emperor indicates upheaval at least at a political level. Some indication of dynastic stress among the Atrebatas can be seen a little earlier, perhaps around 10 BC when the northern part of the Atrebatian territory was taken over by Eppillus, one of the sons of Commius who now issued coins with the mint mark CALLE, showing that he had established himself at *Calleva* (Silchester), at the same time styling himself REX. After this his brother, Tincomaros, was reduced to ruling the southern part of the kingdom. We have, of course, no way of knowing whether the divide was done with the approval of Tincomaros, but it may well have been a contested usurpation which led eventually to Tincomaros' departure and the emergence of the third son of Commius, Verica, as ruler of the reunited kingdom about AD 10.

Meanwhile the situation in Kent seems to have been equally fluid. Caesar had recorded four kings in the region but by about 40–30 BC much of the territory was using coins of Dubnovellaunus (who may not have been the same Dubnovellaunus who ruled at about the same time north of the Thames). Then followed, for a few years, coins issued by Vosenos, but these were soon replaced by a new series issued under the authority of Eppillus, the ruler of the Northern Atrebatas, who seems now to have extended his sphere of power. It remains a possibility that Eppillus continued to rule his Kentish kingdom after *Calleva* was taken over by Verica.

The last decades of freedom, c. AD 10–43

In the early years of the first century AD a degree of stability was re-established in the Trinovantian/Catuvellaunian area with the emergence of Cunobelin as high king. He ruled for more than thirty years, issuing throughout that time a prodigious amount of gold reflecting the evident prosperity of his kingdom. These two facts – his long reign and the ability of the élites of his kingdom to accumulate wealth, made evident in their burials – together with the increasing Romanization of his coinage, leave little doubt that the basis of his power rested on official Roman support. Cunobelin in adopting the legend *Tasci Fil* was claiming descent from Tasciovanus, and therefore the legitimate right to rule. Whether he was actually a son of Tasciovanus it is impossible to say. From the beginning of his reign his coins were adopted in Cantian territory, replacing the issues of the Atrebatian king Eppillus. This suggests that Cunobelin had immediately extended his authority south of the Thames, thus controlling not only the river routes of Essex but the Thames as well. It is easy to see why, from a Roman viewpoint, Suetonius could refer to him as *Britannorum rex*.

Whether or not Cunobelin re-established a degree of authority over the Iceni is less clear. It seems unlikely that he did, for his coinage occurs infrequently in their territory. Moreover the

Iceni continued to strike their distinctive silver throughout this period, bearing a series of inscriptions: ANTED, ECEN, SAENU and AESU.

The situation among the Atrebates was complex. About AD 10 Eppillus was replaced by Verica, who also claimed to be a son of Commius, presumably Commius II. But already Atrebatian influence seems to have been waning. Their short-lived dominance of the Cantii was rapidly terminated by Cunobelin from the beginning of Verica's reign, and about AD 35 the coins of a new ruler, Epaticcus, appear in Atrebatian territory. They are not numerous and tend to concentrate in the north, in Berkshire and northern Hampshire. Epaticcus poses entertaining problems. He calls himself a son of Tasciovanus and indeed copies the obverses of Cunobelin's staters, but the reverses are derived from Atrebatian issues. The simplest explanation is that he was a rival of Verica's, descended from the Trinovantian/Catuvellaunian dynasty, who was carving out a territory for himself on the north-western frontier between the two tribes. It may have been under pressure from this northern enclave that Verica finally fled to the emperor seeking help in AD 42.

While these events were being played out in the core territories, the peripheral tribes continued much as before. The Durotriges continued with a bronze issue, changing from striking to casting. The Dobunni maintained their gold and silver inscribed with a succession of names: ANTEDRIG, COMUX, EISV, CATTI and INAM. The Corieltavian series of gold and silver were also continued, with complex inscriptions grouping two or three names together. Whether these are kings in the traditional sense, or joint magistrates, is not altogether clear.

The emergence of Epaticcus, on the northern frontier of the Atrebates about AD 35, seems to herald another period of instability. It was at about this time that the coins of a new ruler, Adminius, appeared in Kent. Adminius was a son of Cunobelin. He fell out with his father in AD 39 and fled the country to seek the help of the emperor Gaius, who at this time was involved in problems in Germany. The short-lived Kentish issue suggests a brief attempt to establish a power base among the Cantii.

Gaius was encouraged by the appearance of Adminius to contemplate invading Britain in AD 40, but faced with the Channel, and the fear of what lay beyond, the troop rebelled and the planned attack was shelved. Cunobelin died in or soon after AD 40 and was succeeded by two young men, Togodumnus and Caratacus, possibly his sons. After so long a reign the change of leadership must have had

a further destabilizing effect. At about this time the coins of Epaticcus were replaced by identical types bearing the legend CARA, which it is tempting to see as the coinage of Caratacus replacing, perhaps by force, his kinsman hitherto firmly established in the northern part of Atrebatian territory. It may have been as a result of these events that Trinovantian/Catuvellaunian authority was extended to embrace the Dobunni lying to the west, for Dio, writing of the situation at the time of the invasion, tells us that the 'Bodunni [presumably the Dobunni] were subject to Catuvellaunian kings' (LX, 6). Another casualty of these troubled times was Verica, who fled to the emperor, now Claudius, in AD 42, precipitating the invasion of AD 43.

The coin evidence, aided by occasional literary references, clearly demonstrates that in the century between Caesar's comings and goings and the Claudian invasion of AD 43 the distinct tribal entities, already apparent before the war, had crystallized out. The indications are that the volume of internal warfare, if not of dynastic bickering, had substantially decreased in the southeast, and with the exception of the 'interregnum' of c. 10 BC–c. AD 10 and the last years of Cunobelin's reign there may have been long periods of stability. In the core area of the south-east there is little evidence of major hillfort refortification or occupation, and even in the peripheral areas, while many hillforts continued to be inhabited, none shows signs of large-scale rebuilding. New types of defences were, however, erected to defend the urban nucleations based around the royal courts and mints. At Camulodunum massive linear dykes were thrown across the tongue of land between the River Colne and the Roman river, enclosing an area of 30 square kilometres, while similar earthworks straddle the coastal plain around Selsey, near Chichester, in the territory of the Atrebates – their most extended form defines an area of 150 square kilometres. Fragments of similar systems are found around the urban settlements at Verulamium and at Bagendon, Glos., and in north Oxfordshire, where, however, no settlement area has yet been discovered. Evidently the new defences involved new strategic concepts. Territories were now being defended – territories which included not only the main urban nucleus but also scattered satellites, individual farms, cultivation plots and pastures. It has sometimes been assumed that the earthworks were designed against threat of chariot warfare; in any event, they are massive enough to be considered as defensive rather than merely as territorial boundaries.

The troubled times following the death of Cunobelin and the growing threat of Roman invasion must have had some effect, and there may well have been a wave of refortification at some of the old defended sites. This is certainly apparent in the West Country.

At Maiden Castle and at South Cadbury the earlier ramparts were

refurbished, while at Hod Hill a hasty attempt at multivallation was being undertaken but was halted by the Roman advance of 43. A totally new bivallate earthwork appears to have been constructed about this time at Boscombe Down West, Wilts., and there is some evidence of similar activity in many of the other hillforts of the south and west. The well-known reference to the Roman attack on the western forts (Suetonius, *Vesp.* 4), more than twenty of which Vespasian had to subdue in the campaign of 43–4, is supported by the evidence of slaughter at Maiden Castle and Spettisbury and by the ballista attack on Hod Hill. There can be little doubt that in the early 40s feverish attempts were made to bring the old forts of the area into a defensive readiness, using traditional techniques of fortification.

Basic fighting techniques seem to have remained much the same between the invasions of Caesar and the Claudian conquest. Chariots were still in use at a major engagement at a river crossing in 43, during the Boudican rebellion in 60 and at the routing of the Caledonians under Calgacus in 84. Indeed, Tacitus, while stating that the strength of the British armies lay in their infantry, admitted that ‘some tribes also fought from chariots driven by noblemen and defended by their dependants’ (*Agricola*, xii). The contemporary battle accounts still bear out the fierce but uncontrolled nature of the Briton at war but, as Tacitus remarks, ‘they eventually failed because they are distracted between the jarring factions of rival chiefs. Indeed, nothing has helped us more in war with their strongest nations than their inability to co-operate. It is but seldom that two or three states unite to repel a common danger: fighting in detail they are conquered wholesale.’ Evidently little had changed in a hundred years.

7

The tribes of the south-eastern core Catuvellauni/Trinovantes, Cantii and Atrebates

In the Late Iron Age, Britain can be divided into three broad zones: a *core* comprising the southeast which shared many cultural characteristics with the Continent; a *periphery* comprising an arc of coin-issuing tribes stretching from Dorset to Lincolnshire; and a *beyond*, that is the rest of Britain west and north of the periphery where coinage had not been introduced into the socioeconomic system. This threefold division provides a convenient way of considering the Late Iron Age and will form the basis for the next three chapters. In this chapter we will be concerned with the tribes of the core: the Trinovantes/Catuvellauni, difficult to distinguish from each other numismatically, the Atrebates and the Cantii.

Much of this region, from Kent to the Fens and from the east coast inland to the Ouse valley and the Upper Thames, shared a number of cultural aspects with the Belgic areas of northern Gaul ([Figure 7.1](#)). Ceramic technology, burial rites, economy and socio-political structure showed only slight variation from one end of the region to the other. Nevertheless, behind this apparent unity lay two major tribal groupings – the Trinovantes/Catuvellauni and the Cantii – both recognizable through their distinctive coinages and both following discrete political policies in relation to each other and to the threat of Roman invasion. Given only the material and structural evidence it would have been very difficult to distinguish between them, yet the coin evidence and subsequent history leaves no doubt that very different political entities were involved.

Until comparatively recent times it has been conventional to refer to this cultural continuum as ‘Belgic’. The term was convenient in that it reflected the similarity of culture between this region and the Belgic area of northern Gaul, but it took with it the underlying assumption that the region had been settled by the immigrant Belgae referred to by Caesar. Since, however, serious doubt has been cast on this latter view, and a good case can now be made out for the undoubted similarities resulting from regular and intensive social and economic

intercourse between the tribes on either side of the Channel, the word Belgic is best avoided. Instead the term *Aylesford–Swarling* culture will be used, which is defined on purely archaeological criteria without historical preconception.

The southern part of the core zone, which eventually became the territory of the Atrebates, shares a range of cultural similarities which are sufficiently different from the *Aylesford–Swarling* culture to require a separate name: here we will use the phrase *Atrebatie culture* since it is the culture of the historically attested Atrebates and does not extend beyond their normal boundaries.

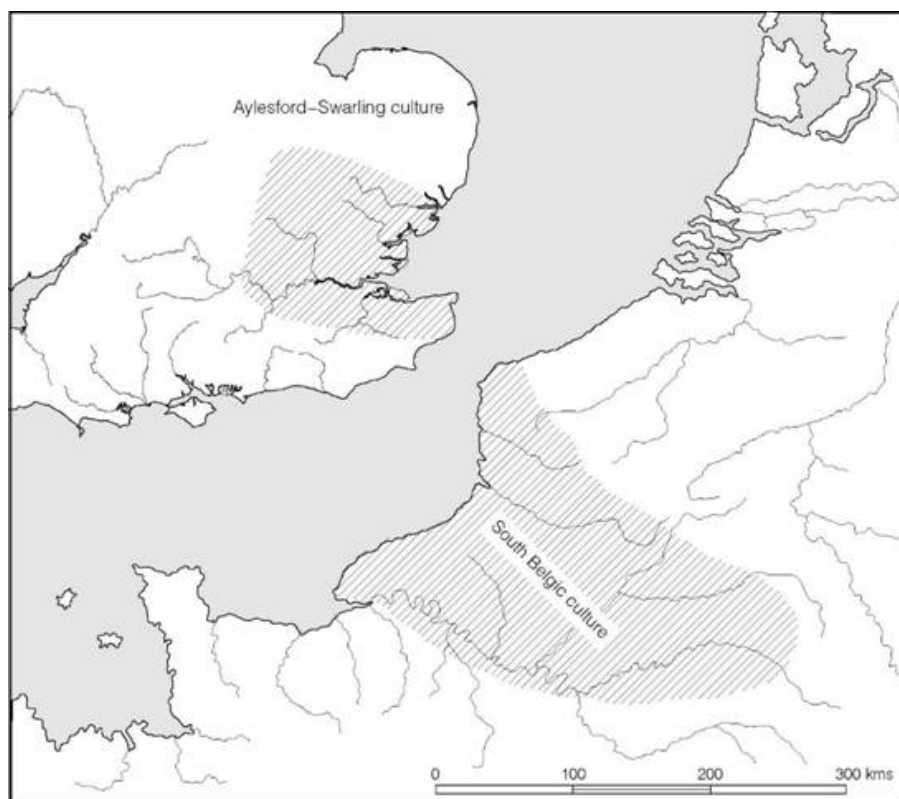


Figure 7.1 Distribution of the *Aylesford–Swarling* and south Belgic cultures (source: author).

The Atrebatie and *Aylesford–Swarling* terminology reflects broad cultural groupings defined archaeologically, while the tribal entities based on coinage are essentially political constructs. Moving down the scale, a more detailed appraisal of the coin evidence allows the possibility of discerning, albeit dimly, smaller *socio-economic units*. The method used to define them is the attempted recognition of recurring

patterns in successive coin distributions (Cunliffe 1981b). Though a rather inexact tool, and to a degree subjective, it does allow a number of zones to be postulated and the fact that most of these contain a major settlement site or oppidum in a roughly central position, lends credibility to their reality (Figure 7.2). These socio-economic zones provide a convenient framework for discussing the political geography of the individual tribes.

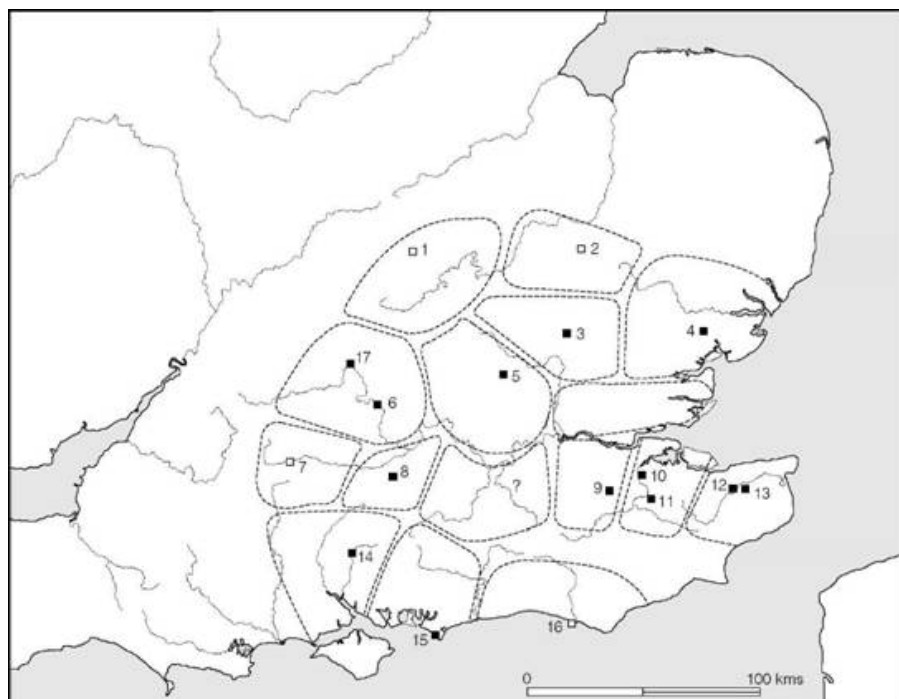


Figure 7.2 Socio-economic zones in the core region in the period 50 BC–AD 10. Black squares denote nucleated settlements with some evidence of urban functions; open squares are possible nucleated settlements: 1 Duston; 2 Cambridge; 3 Braughing; 4 Colchester; 5 Verulamium; 6 Dyke Hills; 7 Marlborough; 8 Silchester; 9 Oldbury; 10 Rochester; 11 Loose; 12 Bigbury; 13 Canterbury; 14 Winchester; 15 Selsey; 16 Castle Hill, Newhaven; 17 Abingdon (source: Cunliffe 1981b with modifications).

The Aylesford–Swarling culture: pottery and burials

The Aylesford–Swarling culture is named after two Kentish cremation cemeteries of La Tène III date excavated in 1886 and 1921

respectively. The relevant material was first brought together with a full discussion in a paper by Hawkes and Dunning published in 1931. The subject was reconsidered in the light of new finds, both British and Continental, by Birchall (1965) and received a further reassessment by Rodwell in 1976. The Continental background has been discussed by Hachmann (1976) since when there have been further considerations of aspects of the cultural complex (Stead 1976a; Tyers 1980; Thompson 1983).

The culture is characterized by a distinctive range of pottery, usually wheel-made, together with the rite of cremation in flat graves. The associated metalwork is invariably La Tène III. The classic statement of the distribution of the Aylesford–Swarling culture was provided by the distribution map of pedestal urns published by Hawkes and Dunning (1931, figure 7) and reproduced here as [Figure 1.6](#) (p. 12), which shows the vessels concentrating in Kent, Essex, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and the London area with a few outliers further north and west. In the last sixty years many more sites have been discovered but the pattern has not changed significantly (Thompson 1982). Thus, in terms of the known tribes, the Aylesford–Swarling culture is the folk culture of the Catuvellauni, Trinovantes and Cantii.

D.F. Allen's reassessment of Celtic coinage in Britain (1961a) showed that a number of Gallo-Belgic issues were reaching Britain from the end of the second century BC, and for a while it seemed reasonable to interpret this as evidence of a series of migratory movements from the Continent into eastern Britain, bringing an array of new cultural elements with them (Hawkes 1968). Several detailed studies, however, have failed to trace any substantial body of 'Belgic' material pre-dating Caesar's invasion, though Birchall tentatively recognized a potentially early group of pottery. It is clear, therefore, that the developed culture (in the form defined here) is unlikely to have been introduced by Caesar's invaders from 'Belgium' along with Gallo-Belgic coinage. The interpretation which best fits all the evidence is that a long period of social and economic intercourse existed between Britain and Belgic Gaul, allowing the possibility of limited movements of people, but that the Aylesford–Swarling culture proper developed after Caesar's conquest of Gaul as the result of an intensification of trade between the eastern British tribes and their increasingly Romanized Belgic neighbours.

Before proceeding to a discussion of the individual tribal areas, some of the general characteristics of the Aylesford–Swarling culture must be considered.

Pottery is the most characteristic artefact (Figures A:31 and A:32, pp. 642 and 643). It is usually of exceptionally high quality, most of it

being wheel-made with an assurance and similarity of design which suggests commercial production on a large scale by specialists who, in the first instance, may well have been immigrants. Tall, elegantly shaped urns with pedestal bases, conical urns, corrugated vessels and a wide range of elaborately cordoned and grooved bowls make up the bulk of the types, with butt-beakers, tazze, platters and lids occurring less frequently. Also relatively common are the coarser narrow-mouthed jars with their outer surfaces wiped or scored to create rough patterns. This type probably originated in an earlier period but takes on a new formality with the introduction of the techniques of wheel-turning.

After 15–10 BC the locally produced vessels were supplemented by imported fine wares from Gaul, Germany and the Mediterranean, including *terra rubra* and *terra nigra* platters, Gallo-Belgic butt-beakers, Arretine wares and eventually samian pottery, while from the middle of the first century BC wine was being imported in some quantity in large amphorae. Some local copying of the imports occurred, particularly of the Gallo-Belgic beakers and platters, and it is probable that the production of the pale fabric butt-beakers of Gaulish type had begun at Camulodunum before the invasion of AD 43.

The culture is best known through its cemeteries and isolated burials, which form a significant part of the archaeological record. A few examples will suffice to demonstrate the range of burial rites. At Verulamium a typical cemetery has been excavated in its entirety, close to the nucleus of the Prae Wood Belgic settlement ([Figure 7.3](#)). Here no fewer than 463 individual cremations were discovered, usually placed inside an urn buried in a small pit, and often accompanied by one or more accessory vessels and by bronze brooches. Less frequently other grave-goods were buried, including mirrors, bracelets, keys, knives, shears, gaming pieces, spoons and toilet-sets – in fact, a range of personal belongings appropriate to both males and females. Some of the burials, richer than others, were heaped up on the floor of larger grave-pits, and several of these were placed in the centres of rectangular ditched enclosures containing poorer satellite burials arranged in a circle around the principal grave. The cemetery also produced eighteen inhumations, of which sixteen were unaccompanied. Judging by the quantity of imported Gallo-Belgic wares, which are unlikely to have arrived in Britain much before 10 BC, the cemetery must have been in use throughout the half-century before the invasion of AD 43.

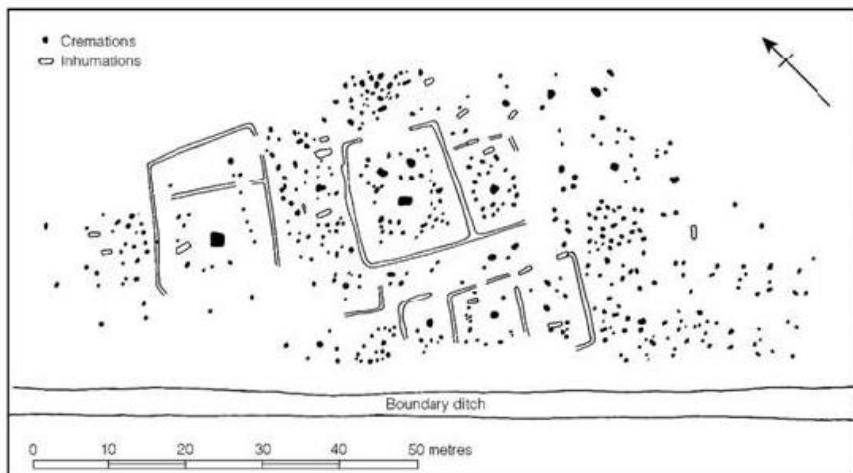


Figure 7.3 *The cremation cemetery at Prae Wood, Verulamium, Herts. (source: Stead 1969).*

The large-scale excavation of the Verulamium cemetery allows the site to serve as a type example for La Tène III cremation cemeteries in general. To this category belong the two type-sites of Aylesford and Swarling, both of which are somewhat earlier than Verulamium. Neither site was excavated under modern conditions, and apart from the groups of grave-goods little is known of the general arrangement or plan of the cemeteries. At Swarling, however, two groups of cremations were found: an eastern group of nine and a western group of ten burials. Status distinctions were evident in the care with which some of the graves were dug, as well as from the number of accessory vessels provided and the occasional presence of fibulae. Grave 13 was outstanding in that the main burial was placed in an iron-bound wooden bucket together with two elaborate bronze fibulae, while standing around were six pottery vessels, no doubt once containing offerings of food and drink. Such elaboration suggests the burial of a person of wealth and status.

Elaborate bucket burials were also a feature of the Aylesford cemetery, where three such groups can be reconstructed (Birchall 1965, 243–9). Burial X contained a large wooden bucket bound with iron, together with six pots; burial Y was richer (Figure 7.4), consisting of a circular chalk-lined pit within which lay a bronze-plated bucket (Figure 7.5) containing the cremation and a fibula, a bronze oenochoe (jug) and a patella (pan), both of Italian manufacture, together with a number of pots. The third burial, Z, produced a bronze-mounted wooden tankard with bronze handles surrounded, apparently, by five or six pots. Since the Italian bronze

vessels and the brooch from grave Y are types well known on the Continent in contexts dating to 50–30 BC, it may be assumed that the Aylesford burial dates to somewhere within the second half of the first century BC. The exact relationship of the three rich burials to the poorer cremations is unrecorded but the existence of circular settings of burials hints at the possibility of satellite arrangements comparable to those at Verulamium.

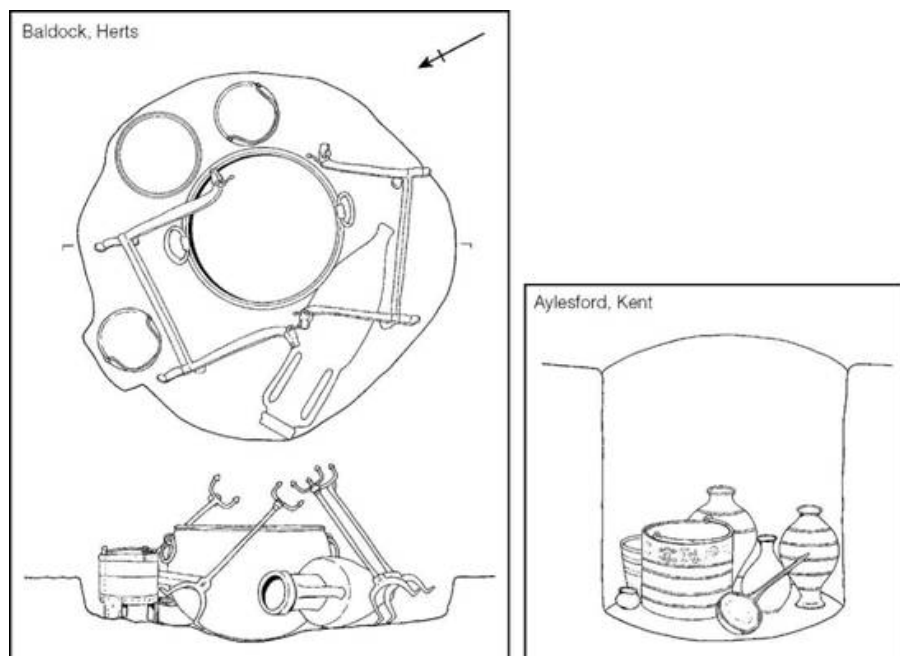


Figure 7.4 Bucket burials from Baldock, Herts., and Aylesford, Kent (sources: Baldock, Stead and Rigby 1986; Aylesford, A.J. Evans 1890).

An even richer bucket burial was found at Baldock, Herts., in 1967 during construction work (Figure 7.4): a subsequent excavation enabled details of the grave to be reconstructed. It comprised a roughly circular pit 1.6 m in diameter dug down into the solid chalk to a depth of 0.3 m in which had been placed a large bronze cauldron, two bronze dishes, two bronze mounted wooden buckets, two iron firedogs, an Italian Dressel 1A amphora and part of a pig. The cremated body, much of which was recovered from the cauldron, had been wrapped in the skin of a brown bear since phalange bones of the beast were found mixed with those of the human occupant. The Dressel 1A amphora might suggest that the burial belonged to the first half of the first century BC but the type does go on in use and a post-Caesarian date seems more likely.

Bucket burials, though few in number, occur widely in the south-east of Britain at Old Warden, Harpenden and Great Chesterford (Figure 7.5) as well as at Aylesford, Swarling and Baldock. Further afield they also occur at Hurstbourne Tarrant and possibly Silkstead in Hampshire and at Marlborough in Wiltshire (Stead 1971a). These peripheral burials presumably represent the adoption of Aylesford–Swarling traditions by the local Atrebatric aristocracy.



Figure 7.5 Reconstruction of bronze-bound buckets from Aylesford, Kent (left) and Great Chesterford, Essex (above) (scales: approx. $\frac{1}{3}$). (Aylesford, photograph: British Museum; Great Chesterford, photograph: University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Cambridge).

North of the Thames a group of exceptionally rich cremation burials (Figure 7.6) has been defined and named after the type-site of Welwyn, Herts. (Stead 1967). Six examples definitely belong to this group – Hertford Heath, Mount Bures, Snailwell, Stanfordsbury, Welwyn and Welwyn Garden City – and a further eight sites in the same general area are possibly also of this kind. The Welwyn type burials may be characterized as cremations placed in large grave-pits with no covering mound (Figure 7.7). The pits contained a wide range of grave-goods, including at least one wine amphora (usually more, six being the maximum) and quantities of tableware, much of it imported. Some were provided with imported bronze vases, strainers and patellae, others with silver cups, while one produced imported glass dishes and containers. Clearly the dead person was being provided

with sufficient food and wine to see him on his journey to the next world. Surprisingly, however, meat (or at least meat on the bone) is seldom found. Most burials contained a few personal belongings such as buckles, bracelets, beads and gaming pieces, but weapons are conspicuously absent. Iron firedogs (e.g. [Figure 7.8](#)), spits and in one case a tripod represent the dead man's hearth furniture in several of the graves. The imported material, particularly the Italian bronzes in the earlier graves and the Gallo-Belgic and samian vessels in the later, allow the burials to be arranged in a chronological sequence spanning the century between the invasions of Caesar and Claudius. Welwyn-type cremations represent a tradition of aristocratic burial deeply rooted in the formative period of the Aylesford–Swarling culture north of the Thames.

The most impressive of the rich La Tène III graves in the Aylesford–Swarling region are those found at Lexden and Stanway, close to Camulodunum, and at Folly Lane, Verulamium. The Lexden burial, excavated in 1924, comprised an enormous oval burial pit 8.2 m long placed beneath a barrow 30 m in diameter. The excavation was only summarily published (Layer 1927) but has been recently reassessed, providing a far fuller picture of the grave and its contents (Foster 1986). The body had been cremated and placed in the pit together with an astonishing collection of grave-goods, including a bronze cupid, a boar, a bull, a griffin attachment, a pedestal for a statuette and a number of other copper alloy fittings and attachments. A suit of iron-chain mail, possibly once complete, and fitted with bronze buckles and hinges and silver studs, had been cut up and spread about the grave-pit. There were also silver mounts in the form of corn stems, a quantity of small silver trefoil attachments and a cast silver medallion displaying the head of Augustus moulded from a coin type minted between 19 and 15 BC. A large piece of gold fabric was found in close proximity to the cremation. Among the numerous iron fittings recovered were the bars of a folding stool. The grave was also furnished with a set of local pottery and a number of Italian wine amphorae – at least six of the Dressel 1B type and twice as many of Dressel 2–4.

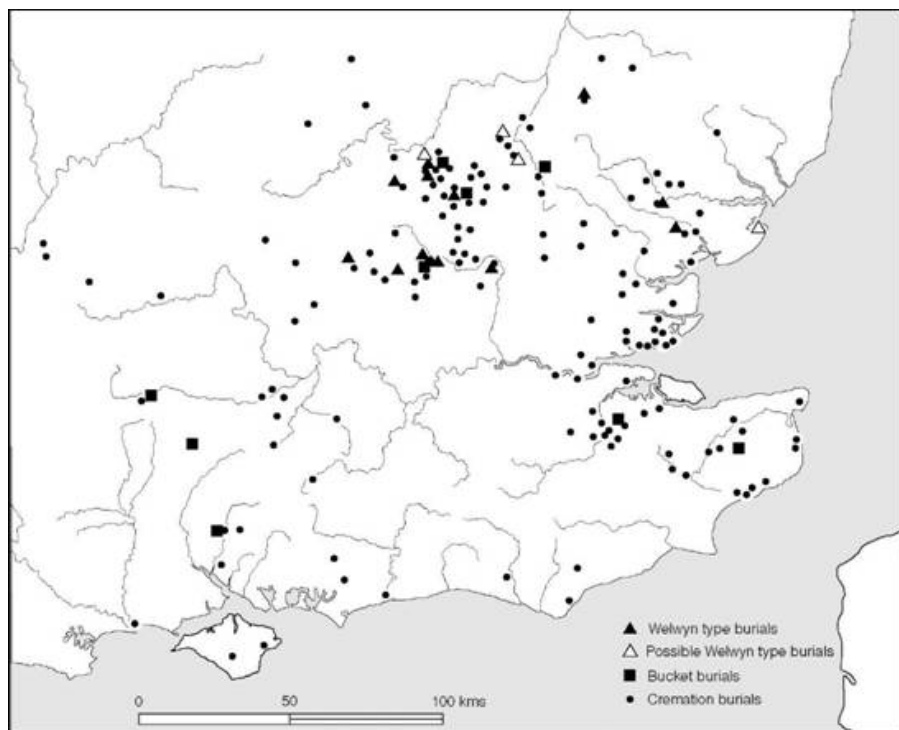


Figure 7.6 *Cremation cemeteries of the Aylesford–Swarling culture* (sources: *Whimster 1977; Fitzpatrick 1997a*).

The grave-goods, taken together, would suggest a date of about 15–10 BC though burial may have occurred some little time later. The occupant of the grave was evidently a man of enormous wealth and status who chose a form of burial, under a barrow, more usual in Gaul than in Britain. His taste in Roman luxury objects and his ability to acquire them implies that he was a member of the Catuvellaunian/Trinovantian aristocracy thoroughly conversant with Roman taste. We will never know the identity of this British king but it is tempting to point out that, on the coin evidence, Tasciovanus died about 10 BC.

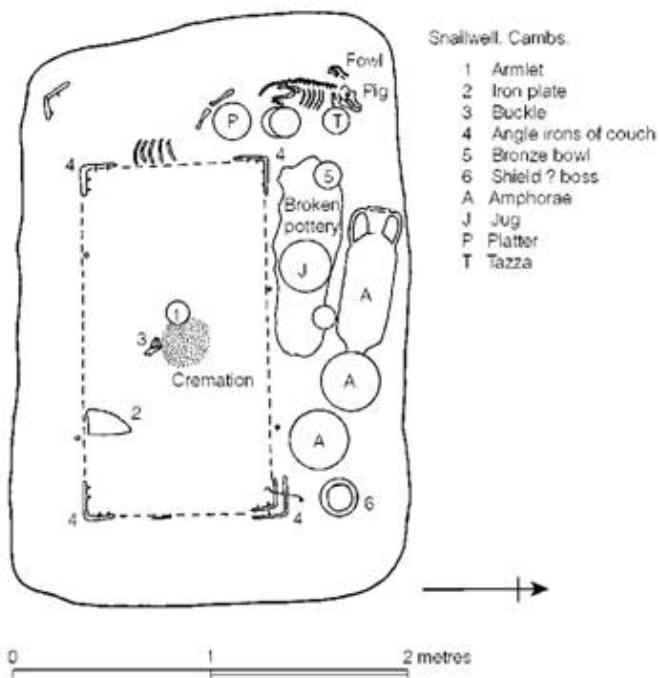
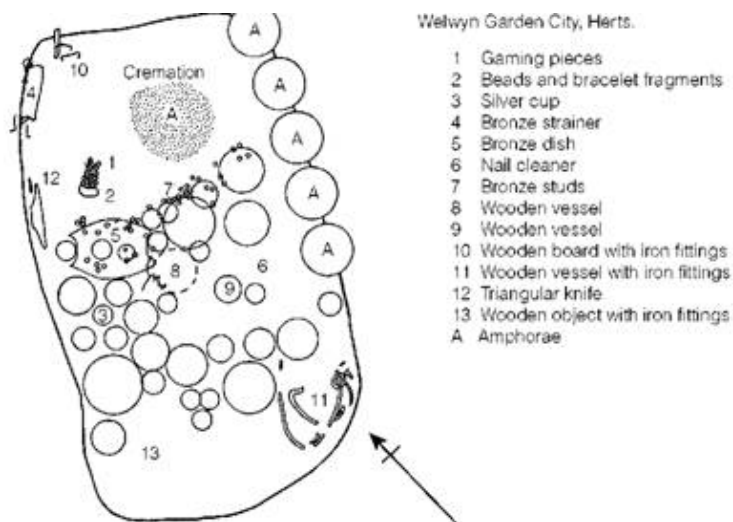


Figure 7.7 La Tène III chieftains' burials (sources: Welwyn Garden City, Stead 1967; Snailwell, Lethbridge 1953).

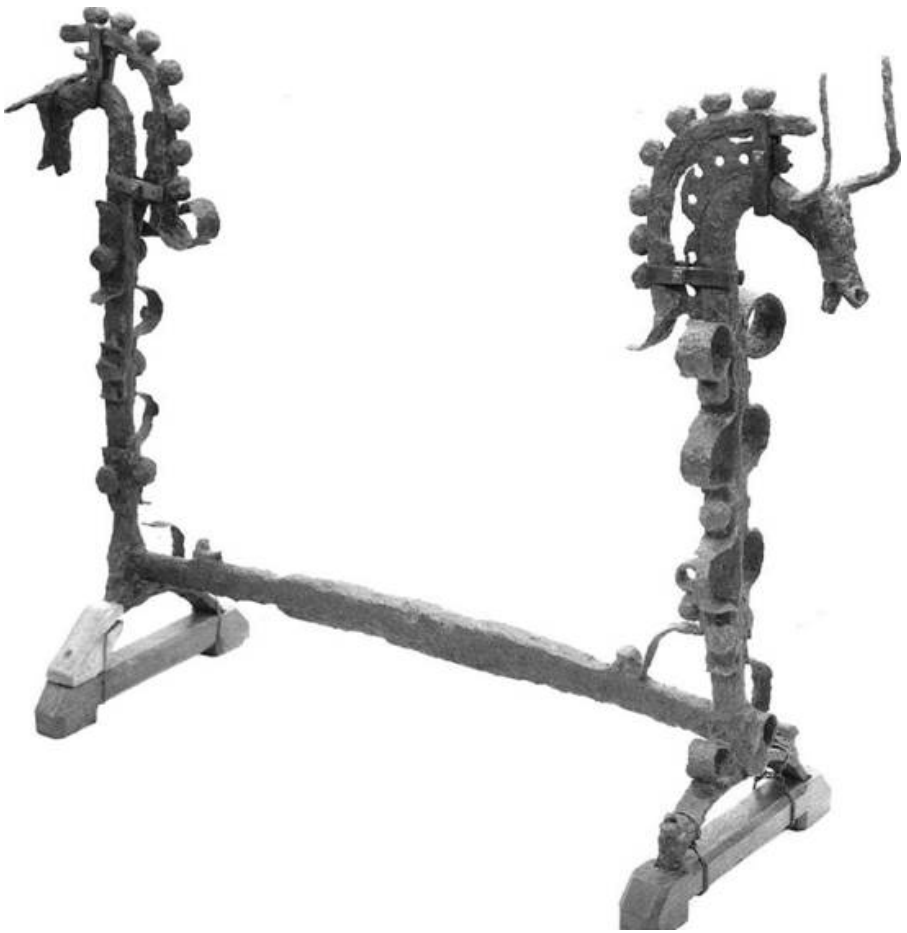


Figure 7.8 *Iron firedog from Chapel Garmon, Denbigh: hearth furniture of the type sometimes buried with the dead (scale: approx. 1/6) (photograph: National Museum of Wales).*

The Lexden burial is typical of a particular class of aristocratic burials which involves two stages in the burial procedures: first the lying in state of the body surrounded by its rich grave- goods, followed by a second, closing, stage in which the body is cremated, the grave-goods are destroyed and the initial grave-pit is levelled. Not far from Lexden, at Stanway, another cemetery involving this same rite has been identified comprising five rectangular burial enclosures. The earliest burial, that of a female, is of about the same date as Lexden but the cemetery seems to have continued in use into the decade or two following the Roman Conquest.

The most spectacular of these high-élite burials was discovered at Folly Lane, Verulamium, within the area of the Late Iron Age

oppidum. In this case the funerary shaft containing the destroyed grave-goods and the nearby pyre site where the cremation took place were fully excavated. The act of deposition seems to have taken place early in the post-Conquest period c. AD 55–60, and some time after this the pyre site was monumentalized with a Romano-Celtic temple. Folly Lane and Stanway are particularly interesting in showing the longevity of the late first-century BC funerary tradition.

From the foregoing summary it will be seen that the burial rite of the Aylesford–Swarling culture, while varied, was relatively consistent. It reflects a strong belief in the afterlife and it mirrors very clearly the rigid social stratification which must have existed. Simple cremations, bucket burials, Welwyn burials and the Lexden type represent four distinct levels in the social hierarchy from peasant through two tiers of ‘lordship’ to king.

It is not surprising that the ‘kingly’ burial tradition should be situated at the oppida of Verulamium and Camulodunum which were probably the paramount tribal capitals at this time. What is equally noteworthy is the cluster of rich chiefly burials on either side of the Chilterns in the valleys of the Lea, Ouse and Cam. What these may reflect are the centres of power of those able to command the trade routes between the periphery and the core (Cunliffe 1988b, 150–3). If so then the Welwyn burials may represent the vassal chieftains upon whom the paramounts – the dynastic rulers – built their power.

Within the territory of the Aylesford–Swarling culture there developed a series of large nucleated settlements which justify the use of the term urban or proto-urban. Their form and size vary considerably but for ease of discussion we shall divide them into three categories: *enclosed oppida*, *territorial oppida* and *nucleated oppida*. [Figure 7.2](#) shows the distribution of the major sites of this kind for which the evidence is convincing. Individual sites will be considered in the following sections.

The Catuvellauni/Trinovantes

The Catuvellauni and Trinovantes were the two principal tribes occupying a wide swathe of territory north of the Thames including the modern counties of Essex, Hertfordshire and parts of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Cambridgeshire and Suffolk. Some indication of the extent of their territory and influence is indicated by the distribution of the coins of Tasciovanus and Cunobelin ([Figure 7.9](#)). Since it is difficult to distinguish the coinages of the two tribes apart, they are here considered together.

North of the Thames the extent of the Aylesford–Swarling culture is roughly coterminous with Trinovantian/Catuvellaunian coinage but

the coin evidence allows the tentative recognition of a series of discrete socio-economic regions (Figure 7.2), in several of which large nucleated settlements, or oppida, have been identified. While it must be admitted that little is yet known of these oppida in Britain the work at Verulamium has defined the main characteristics of this type of site (Figure 7.10). The earliest nuclear settlement in the region lies on a gravel plateau above the River Lea at Wheathampstead, Herts., where massive earthworks flank at least three sides of an enclosure of some 36–40 hectares – the size of the average Romano-British town. Limited excavation within has demonstrated the presence of occupation spanning the latter part of the first century BC but apparently ending before 15–10 BC (if the absence of Gallo-Belgic vessels, which began to be imported at about this time, is regarded as significant and reliable). It has been suggested that Wheathampstead was the oppidum where Cassivellaunus made his last stand against Caesar. Caesar tells us that British strongholds in general were densely wooded spots fortified with ramparts and ditches and that Cassivellaunus' stronghold was protected by forests and marshes and had been filled with a large number of men and cattle for their own protection. Wheathampstead would indeed fulfil these conditions, but the identification is unlikely ever to be proven and some doubt has been cast on the exact status of the site (Dyer 1976b).

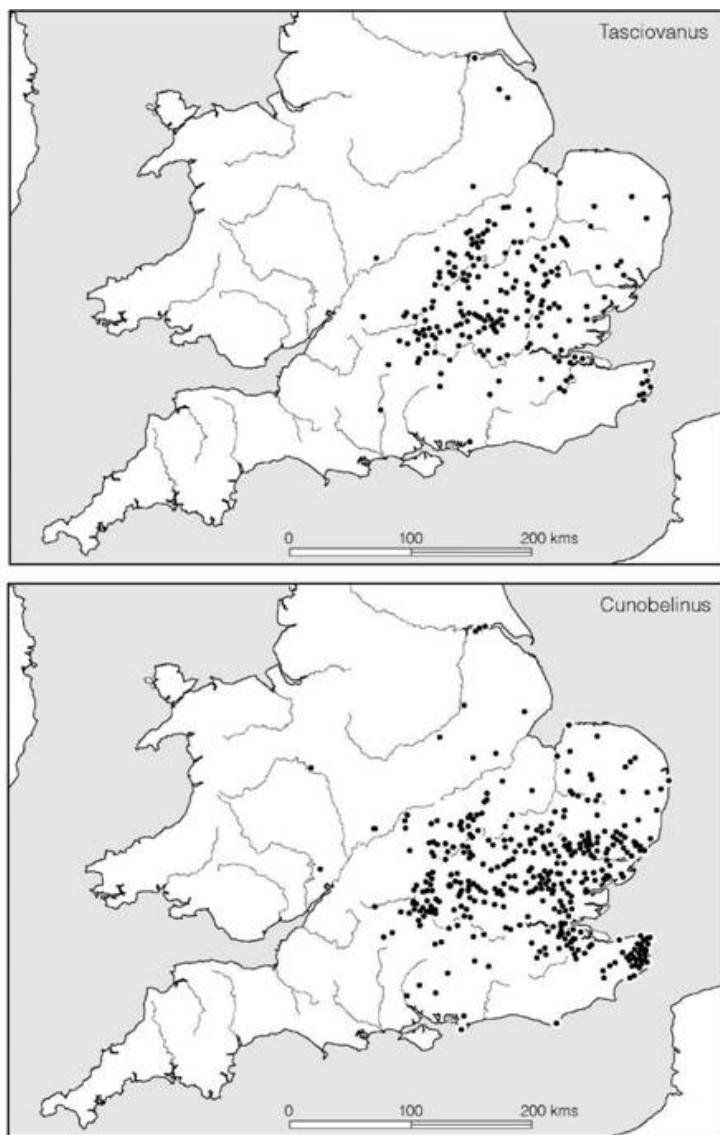


Figure 7.9 *Distribution of the coins of Tasciovanus and Cunobelinus indicating extent of Catuvellaunian/ Trinovantian territory and influence (source: CCI 2003).*

The abandonment of Wheathampstead is apparently matched by the growth of Verulamium, 8 km to the south-west and occupying a similar plateau position above the River Ver in the area of what is now Prae Wood. Plentiful imports were found, showing that the site reached its maximum period of occupation in the first half of the first century AD. Instead of massive earthworks, the main inhabited area of the oppidum was enclosed by relatively slight ditches and palisades,

altered on several occasions, within which lay the huts, drainage ditches and ovens of the settlement. Outside the boundary ditch flanking this nucleus was the cemetery referred to above. Other settlement areas must have existed nearby: one, found closer to the river beneath the Roman town, produced the debris of a Late Iron Age mint; another has been identified at Gorhambury to the north just within the Devil's Dyke. Indeed it is possible that the Gorhambury and Prae Wood settlement areas are simply the outlying parts of the oppidum the core of which lies beneath the later Roman town. Another possibility is that settlement was dispersed rather than concentrated at a single nucleus. The Folly Lane burial overlooked the main settlement zone from the north bank of the Ver.

One further aspect of the local settlement pattern deserves consideration. From a point close to Wheathampstead to as far as the river Ver opposite the settlement at Prae Wood runs a massive defensive bank and ditch known as Beech Bottom Dyke, the staggered line of which is continued by a lesser earthwork, Devil's Dyke, to the west of the river a little way north of the settlement. It seems probable that these banks and ditches form part of a series of dykes designed to defend and define the territory of the oppidum and its satellite settlements. As we shall see, systems of linear earthworks reach complex proportions at Camulodunum and in the Chichester region. The lack of such a development at Verulamium might be explained by the fact that the seat of centralized government had moved to Camulodunum early in the first century AD, relieving Verulamium of its political importance. If so, the Beech Bottom Dyke–Devil's Dyke complex could be seen as an early stage in the development of territorial defences, arrested before the system could achieve its ultimate form.

Linear earthworks must be regarded as a new concept in defensive architecture arising late in the British Iron Age. Similar systems are recorded on the Continent. Tacitus (*Annals* ii, 19), describing the assembly of a Germanic tribe called the Cherusci, specifically mentions their choice of a location hemmed in by a river and forests which were surrounded by deep bogs. On the one side without natural defences the neighbouring tribe, the Angrivarii, had constructed a 'broad earthwork as a boundary'. Here, surely, is a direct reference to large-scale linear defences erected to supplement natural obstacles in much the same way as the Beech Bottom complex makes careful use of the landscape.

If Verulamium represents the beginnings of linear defensive systems, Camulodunum must demonstrate the ultimate development ([Figure 7.11](#)), for here a series of dykes, many of them laid out in straight lines running between the Roman river and the River Colne,

carve out a territory of some 31 square kilometres. The system is so complex that more than one phase of construction must be involved. It is, in fact, possible to postulate an early nucleus at Gosbecks Farm where aerial photography has identified a large ditched enclosure of presumed Late Iron Age date followed by an elaborate Roman temple complex. Rodwell put forward a sequence involving six phases of development (Rodwell 1976, 339–59). His assessment was based largely upon topographical considerations. Following the publication of more archaeological data a simpler scheme has been proposed (Hawkes and Crummy 1995, 176–7) identifying two Late Iron Age phases. The first, they suggest, comprises Heath Farm Dyke and dates to c. 25 BC; the second saw the addition of Lexden Dyke and Sheepen Dyke some time around AD 5 ([Figure 7.12](#)). The rest of the system, they argue, was constructed at the time of the invasion, in AD 43, and in the twenty years or so following.

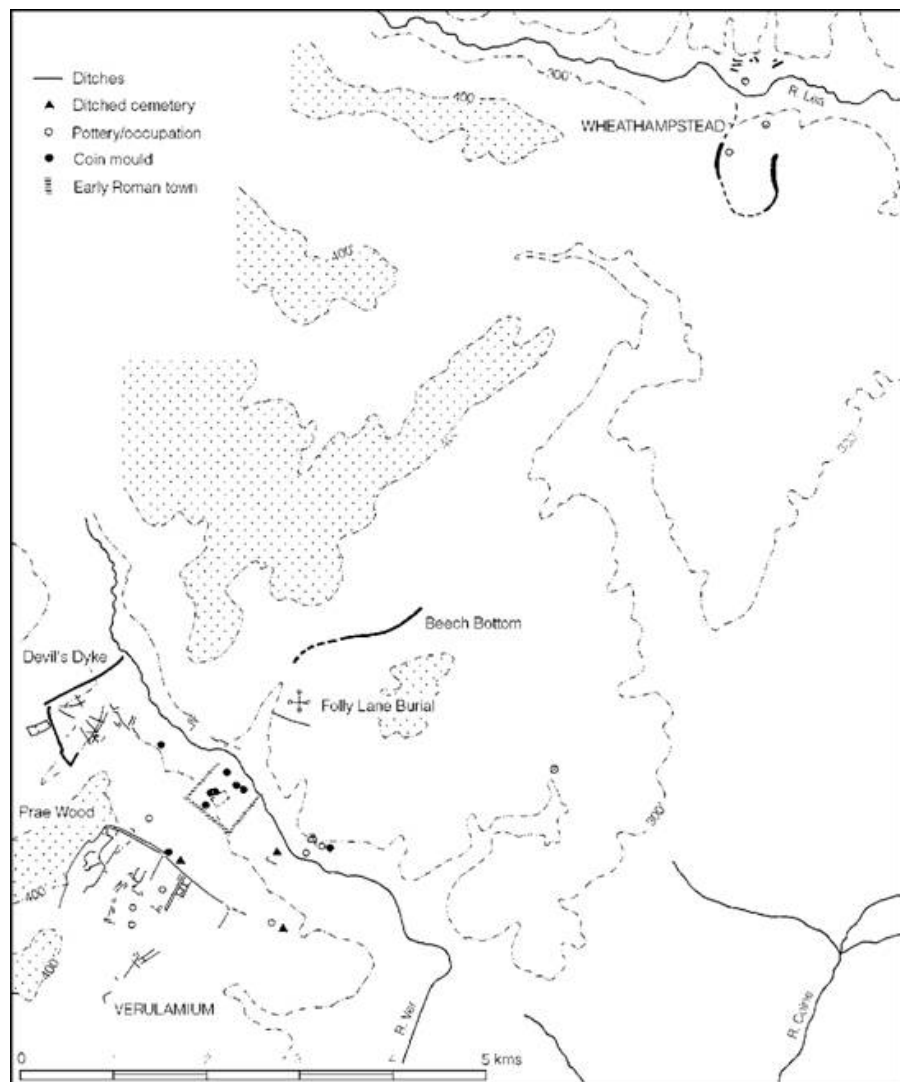


Figure 7.10 Late Iron Age occupation in the Verulamium–Wheathampstead region (source: Saunders and Havercroft 1982 with additions).

Within the Late Iron Age defended area a number of foci of activity have been identified. At Gosbecks Farm, we have already noted the rectangular enclosure: the Lexden burial and an associated cemetery were also enclosed by the Lexden Dyke. The Sheepen site, which has been examined by extensive excavation (Hawkes and Hull 1947), has yielded ample evidence of scattered huts of apparently circular and sub-rectangular form together with pits, ditches, the debris from a mint and masses of imported pottery. Here, evidently, lay a centre of

some importance. The enormous quantity of imported wares found in one area has even suggested to the excavator the possibility that here was the actual residence of Cunobelin. Such an attribution, while possible, can never be proved.

While Verulamium and Camulodunum are undoubtedly the two principal urban centres in the territory of the Trinovantes/Catuvellauni, several other sites may be claimed to have urban status. Of these the best known lies in the vicinity of Braughing, Herts. Early occupation, beginning in the Middle Iron Age, was probably focused on the hillfort at Gatesbury Wood overlooking the River Rib but by the last decades of the first century BC occupation had spread to cover an area of some 100 ha. No enclosing dyke systems have yet been traced so at present Braughing must be classed as an unenclosed oppidum. Excavation, most extensively at Skeleton Green, has exposed evidence of rectangular timber buildings associated with chalk floors and gravel spreads spanning the period from c. 15 BC to the Roman Conquest.

A potentially similar site lies beneath the Roman settlement at Baldock, Herts.: occupation here began c. 50 BC. Since the extent of the pre-Roman settlement is not known it cannot yet be claimed to be of urban status though its subsequent Roman development is suggestive of its economic potential. Two other possible minor oppida have been claimed at Norsey Wood, Billericay, and Mount House, Braintree, but firm evidence is wanting.

The area of Hertfordshire between the River Lea and the Chilterns was particularly densely settled in the Late Iron Age, including as it does the sites of Verulamium, Wheathampstead, Welwyn, Baldock and Braughing (Bryant and Niblett 1997). Each of these nucleations will have performed one or more of a number of functions ranging from urban centres to rural markets. They show just how complex and densely settled was the landscape of the south-east at the time of the invasion.

Turning now to the outer fringes of the territory, extensive pre-Roman occupation existed beneath nucleated Roman settlements at Cambridge and Duston near Northampton; both are potential locations for oppida but in the absence of adequate publication the question must remain open. In the Upper Thames valley, at Dorchester, the evidence is somewhat more convincing. Here the massive earthworks of an enclosed oppidum known as Dyke Hills defend an area in the bend of the River Thames close to a major crossing point overlooked by the Early and Middle Iron Age hillfort of Wittenham Clumps. In the post-Conquest period a small Roman town developed just north of the oppidum. Further upriver, at the confluence of the Thames with the Ock, another massive Late Iron Age enclosure of some 33 ha, defined

by three concentric ditches, has been identified beneath Abingdon. Like Dyke Hills it commands a major route node at a river crossing. A rather different kind of site lies to the north-west on the slopes of the Cotswolds. Here the North Oxfordshire Grim's Ditch complex has the appearance of a territorial oppidum rather like Camulodunum but no concentrations of pre-conquest occupational activity have yet been identified.

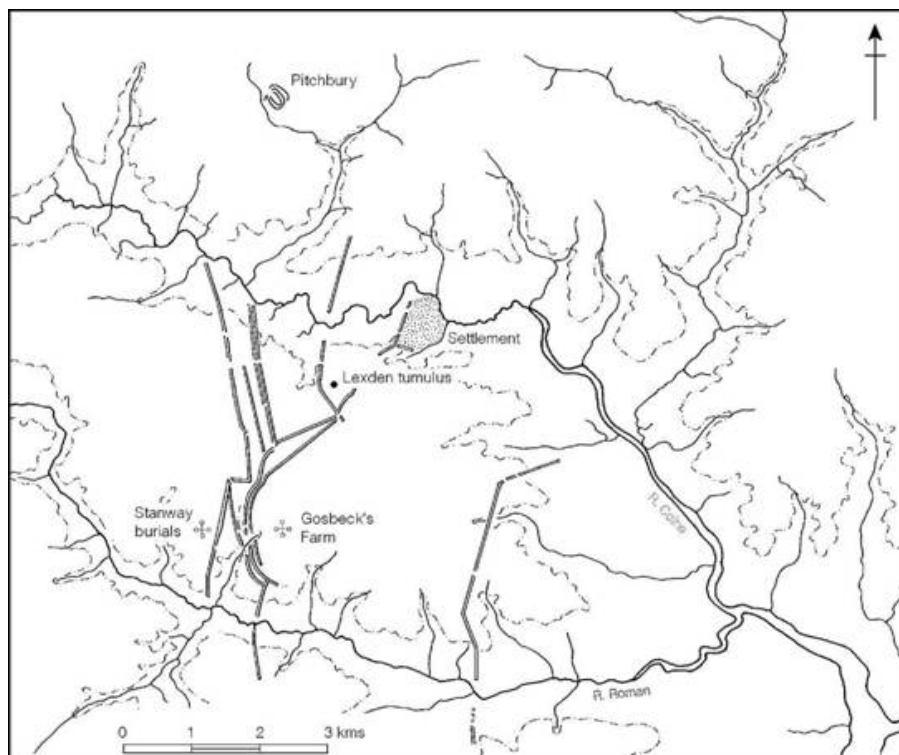


Figure 7.11 Late Iron Age and early Roman settlement in the region of Camulodunum (source: Hawkes and Crummy 1995 with amendments).

Within the territory of the Trinovantes/Catuvellauni the reoccupation of hillforts does not seem to have been particularly common, but several sites on the Chilterns, like Wilbury, Ravensburgh Castle and Cholesbury, produced finds of Aylesford–Swarling type. The same is true of the multivallate fort of Wallbury, Essex, the massive size of which, 12.4 ha, and its location suggest that it has more the characteristics of an enclosed oppidum than a hillfort.

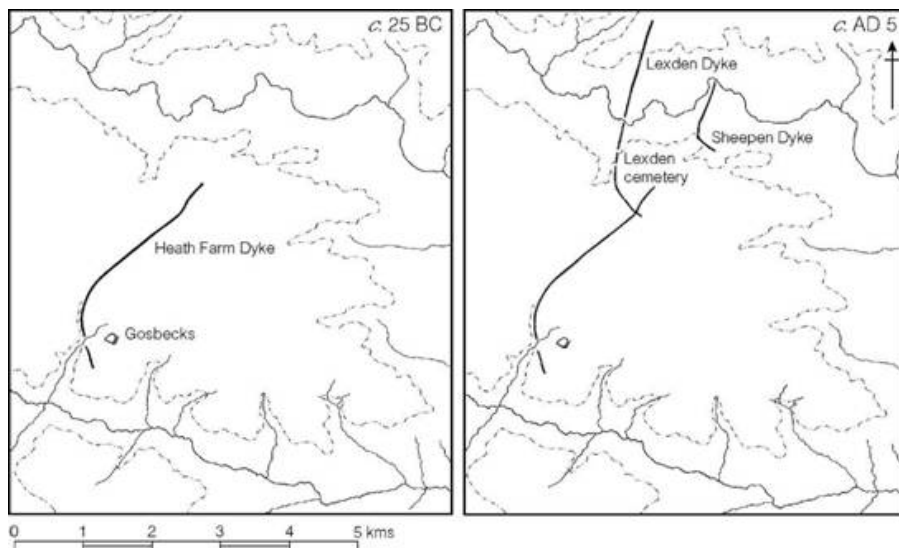


Figure 7.12 *The development of the Camulodunum dykes (source: Hawkes and Crummy 1995).*

The history of the Trinovantes and Catuvellauni cannot yet be disentangled, though a number of general statements, based on an interpretation of the coinage, can be made (and have been summarized in the previous chapter). What all this means in terms of the relative fortunes of the different urban centres and their socio-economic territories is impossible to say except to stress the rise in power of Camulodunum. The vast size of the site, the richness of the Lexden and Stanway burials and the great mass of imported pottery found there leaves little doubt that Camulodunum had gained pre-eminence by the last decades of the first century BC and maintained its status until the Conquest when it was chosen by the Roman administrators to be the first of the *coloniae* of Britannia. Eventually, with better evidence from the other oppida and a more detailed consideration of the chronology of the rich burials, it may be possible to chart the changing fortunes of the smaller units that made up the larger territory over which Cunobelin became the ‘great king’.

The Cantii

The Cantii (Figures 7.13 and 7.14) evidently had a complex history. They were the first of the British tribes to issue their own coinage to serve as small change alongside Gallo-Belgic staters imported before the Caesarian campaigns. After the war they continued to issue their own coins until the turn of the millennium when, for a brief period,

they came under the influence of the Atrebatric ruler Eppillus, before passing into the Trinovantian/Catuvellaunian sphere at about the time when Cunobelin took over leadership. At the time of Caesar's invasions the Cantii had four kings (*BG* V 22), suggesting, but not proving, that they may have been divided into four self-contained kingdoms. Three distinct socio-economic units can be postulated on the basis of the coin distribution, centred respectively on the rivers Stour, Medway and Darent, and it is possible that the Weald or, alternatively, the region of East Sussex, constituted a fourth. That it may, indeed, have been East Sussex gains some support from the fact that the ceramic tradition of the area shared more with Kent and the Lower Thames region than it did with West Sussex. The separate nature of the three coastal units is further emphasized by the distribution patterns of different pottery fabrics: in addition to the ubiquitous grog-tempered wares, the Darent Zone used shell tempering, the Medway greensand tempering and the Stour flint tempering (Thompson 1982, 7). These regions, determined largely by geographical considerations, could approximate to the kingdoms which Caesar noted.

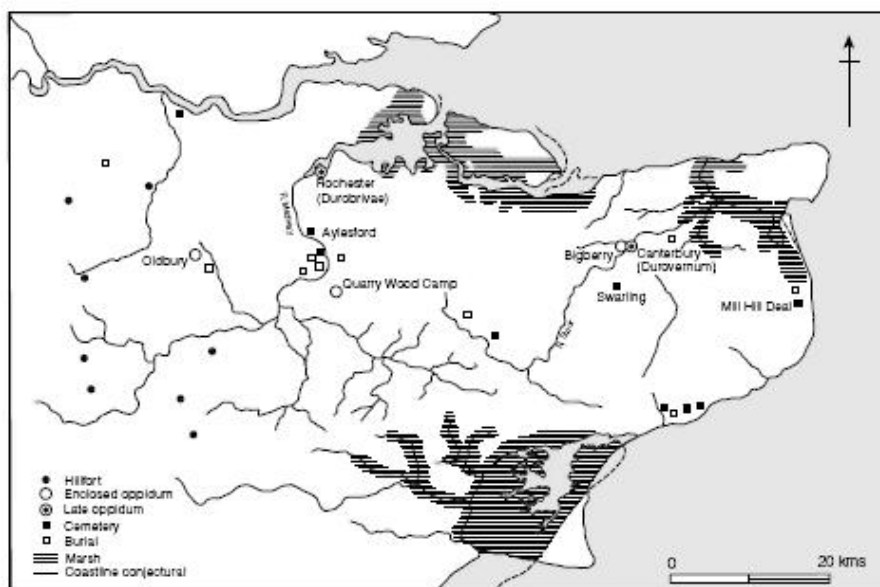


Figure 7.13 *The territory of the Cantii (sources: various).*

The principal ‘urban’ centres of the Cantii have been located, though excavation has been minimal. In the Stour valley the urban nucleus became focused on the site later to be occupied by Roman Canterbury, where occupation, in the form of rectangular huts and

drainage gullies, has been found in the valley bottom on both sides of the river (Figure 7.15). Two kilometres to the west is the large hill-top fortification of Bigbury which conforms to the characteristics of an enclosed oppidum. It has produced an impressive range of metalwork, including a series of tools, horse- and vehicle-fittings, a slave chain and hearth fittings in the form of a firedog and a cauldron chain – objects which tend to emphasize the essentially aristocratic nature of the latest

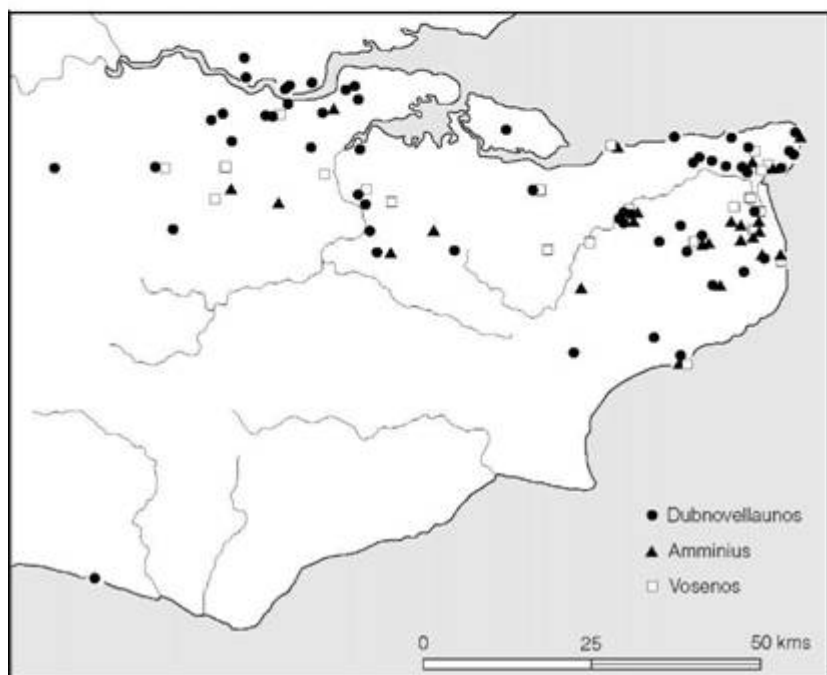
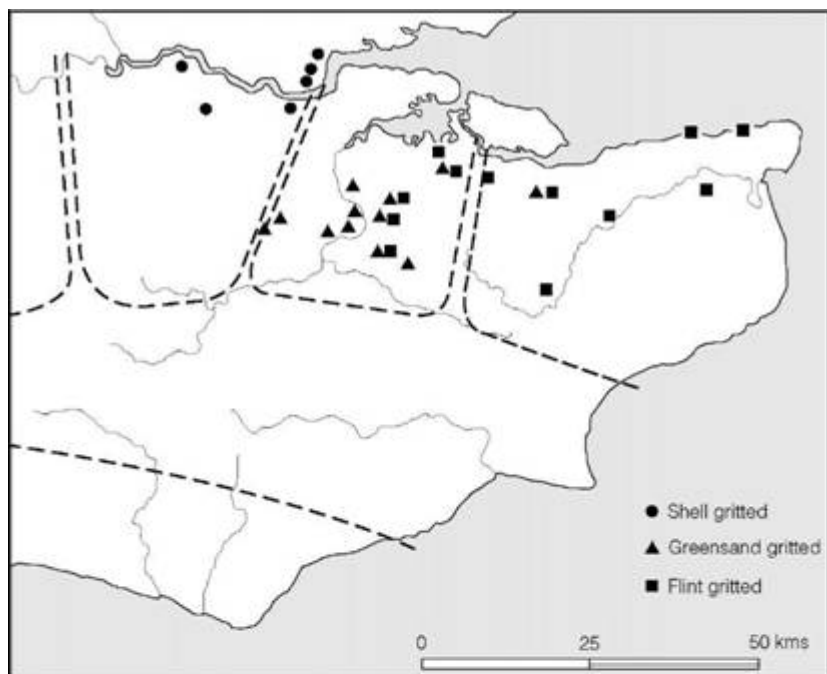


Figure 7.14 Upper: Distribution of pottery of different tempers (source: I. Thompson 1982) shown against theoretical territories (source: author). Lower: Distribution of coins of the Kentish rulers (source: CCI 2003).

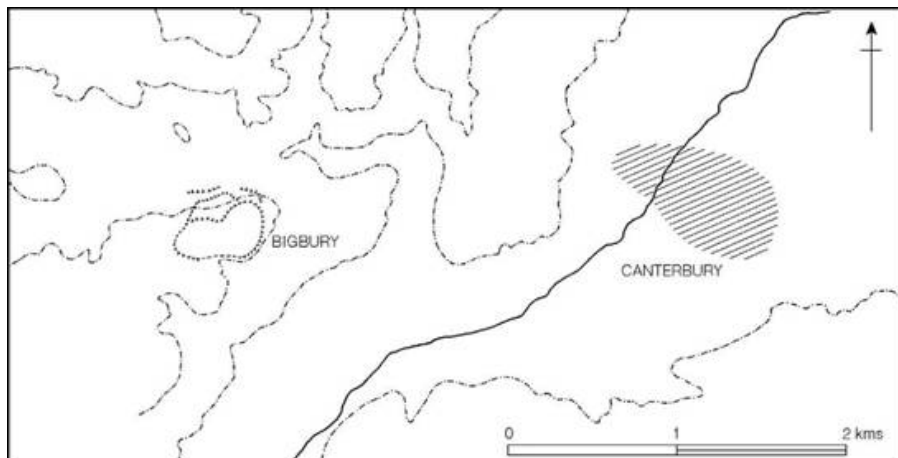


Figure 7.15 Late Iron Age settlement in the vicinity of Canterbury (source: author).

In the Medway valley two sites show urban attributions: an enclosed oppidum with associated linear earthworks at Loose and the site of the Roman town at Rochester where coin flan moulds have come to light. Here again the possibility of a move from one focus to the other is likely but unproven. Further west the high hill-top enclosure of Oldbury has produced some evidence of refortification and occupation in the Late Iron Age but excavation has been on too small a scale to gauge its nature.

The Aylesford–Swarling culture of Kent contrasts with that of the Trinovantes/ Catuvellauni in that there is little evidence of wealth accumulation in the post-war period. Apart from Aylesford and Swarling, rich burials are lacking and neither is of the status of the Welwyn graves. Moreover the Dressel type 1 amphorae, so prolific north of the Thames, are much rarer in Kent (Pollard 1991). The implication must surely be that in the period following Caesar's campaigns the tribes of Kent were peripheral to the economic expansion enjoyed by those north of the Thames. It may be that they were deliberately excluded from trading contracts with the Roman province of Gaul because of their violent opposition to Caesar in 55 and 54 BC.

The Atrebates

The territory of the Atrebates lay, for the most part, south of the Thames, covering the modern counties of East and West Sussex, Surrey, Hampshire, Wiltshire and Berkshire. The tribe came first into historical perspective when Commius arrived in Britain to join his

people already here, after fleeing from Caesar. Commius was a king of the Gallo-Belgic Atrebates and it was probably from this time onwards that his British followers were known by the tribal name. At the time of the Roman Conquest in AD 43 their chief oppidum was formally named *Calleva Atrebatum* (Silchester) but there was also an oppidum somewhere in the Selsey region which seems to have been the centre of a southern polity known as the Regni. *Noviomagus* ('new market'), modern Chichester, may have replaced the Selsey centre after the invasion.

The name of the tribe or tribes over whom Commius established his authority is unrecorded but their identity and approximate location are recorded by the distribution of coin types minted in the period 75–50 BC on which Commius the founder and his immediate successor Commius (II) modelled their own issues. These have been called Atrebat A and B (Van Arsdell 1989), though strictly pre- or proto-Atrebat would be a more appropriate term. The distribution of these pre-war types (Figure 7.16) concentrated in the Middle Thames valley, Wiltshire, Berkshire and Hampshire with a scatter along the Sussex coast, whereas the coins of Commius (II) and his successors are found more commonly in the southern part of this region suggesting the possibility that the northern part of this region – the socio-economic territory based on Dyke Hills (Dorchester-on-Thames) and Abingdon – may have been absorbed into the Trinovantian/Catu- vellaunian sphere during the Gallic War. Some further expansion into the northern part of Atrebat territory came in c. AD 35 when Epaticcus began minting coins at Calleva. His exact origins are uncertain. Though claiming a legitimate relationship to the Trinovantian/Catuvel- launian royal house, he continued to use an Atrebat reverse type. However his origins and allegiance are interpreted, the fact remains that the northern marches of Atrebat territory were unstable. The fluidity of boundaries between the two main power blocks is further shown by the brief ascendancy which the Atrebat king Eppillus enjoyed over the Cantii between c. 5 BC and AD 10, after which he was replaced by the northern king Cunobelin.

The area of the original territory under Commius (II) corresponds closely to the distribution of the saucepan pot wares belonging to the Sussex, Hampshire and Surrey groups, hinting that some degree of cultural unity may well have existed in the pre-Caesarian period, stretching back into the second or third century BC. It was from this background that the new ceramic traditions of the Atrebates developed. Three new style-zones can be recognized, gradually emerging from indigenous traditions (Figure 7.17). These may be defined as an Eastern group, extending along the Sussex coastal plain and downs approximately to the Arun; a Southern group, covering the

rest of Sussex and Hampshire west to the Test; and a Northern group, centring on Salisbury Plain and spreading north to the edge of the Thames valley.

The Eastern group (Figure A:35, p. 646), is characterized by globular jars with a narrow mouth and out-bent rim, some with flat bases and others with foot-rings. Another common type was the jar with a high shoulder, an upright or slightly everted rim and a foot-ring base. Decoration was carried out variously with shallow tooling, rouletting, stamping, painting and the addition of applied cordons, to create horizontal zones of swags and arcs, or sometimes simpler rectilinear zones. It is possible to trace many of the forms and decorative elements back to the preceding Late Caburn–Saltdean tradition, but some influence from the Aylesford–Swarling areas of Kent may be thought to be apparent in the foot-ring and cordoned types.

The Southern Atrebatian ceramic style (Figure A:34, p. 645), centred upon Hampshire and West Sussex, is typified by bead-rimmed jars with high shoulders and wide mouths, found together with high-shouldered bowls with simple upright rims, and necked jars often with a cordon at the junction of the neck and body. Less frequent (and occurring only in the first century AD) are local copies of Gallo-Belgic platters and butt-beakers. The Northern assemblage (Figure A:34, p. 645) is similar in many ways, but the bead-rimmed jars are frequently tightly grooved, and ovoid jars which hark back to the saucepan pot phase of the area occur together with rather larger quantities of Gallo-Belgic imports. There is nothing in either the Southern or Northern assemblages to suggest an intrusive element (except, of course, the imported Gallo-Belgic wares, which were presumably the result of trade). All the basic forms and decorative styles were already in existence in the preceding saucepan pot phase, the only difference being that the Atrebatian wares were, for the most part, wheel-turned. The apparent differences, then, are best explained in terms of the introduction of the technological innovation of the potter's wheel rather than a significant folk movement, although it is possible that some 'Belgic' elements may have been introduced by the supposed immigrants arriving before the Caesarian wars (above, pp. 126-7).

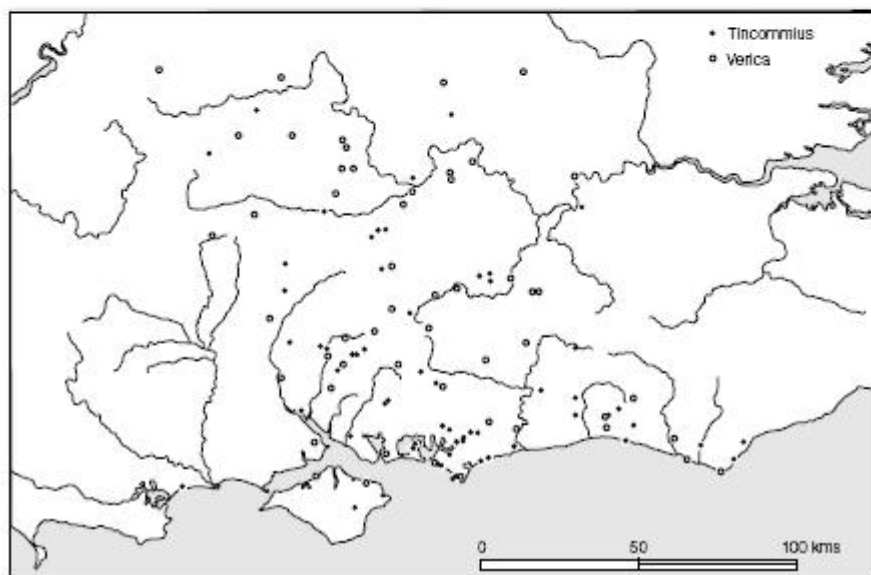
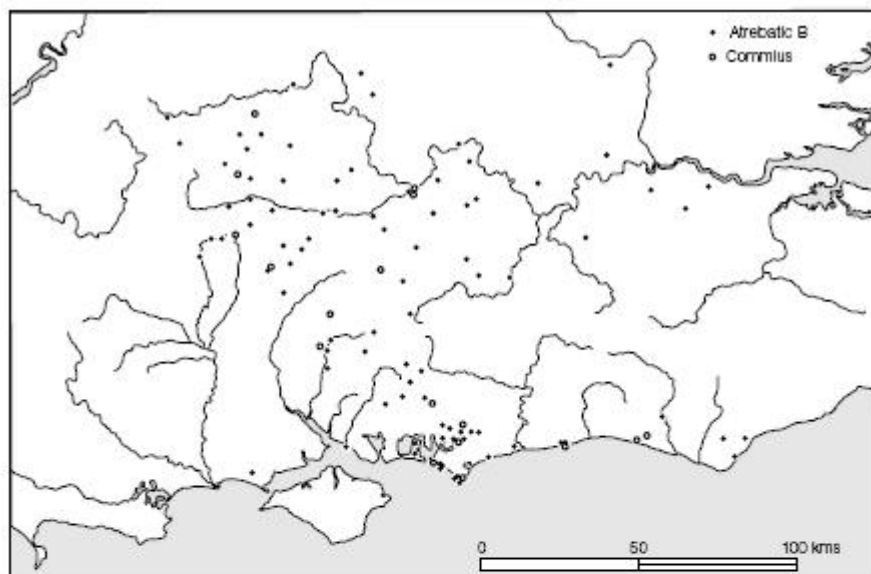


Figure 7.16 Distribution of coins of the Atrebates (source: CCI 2003).

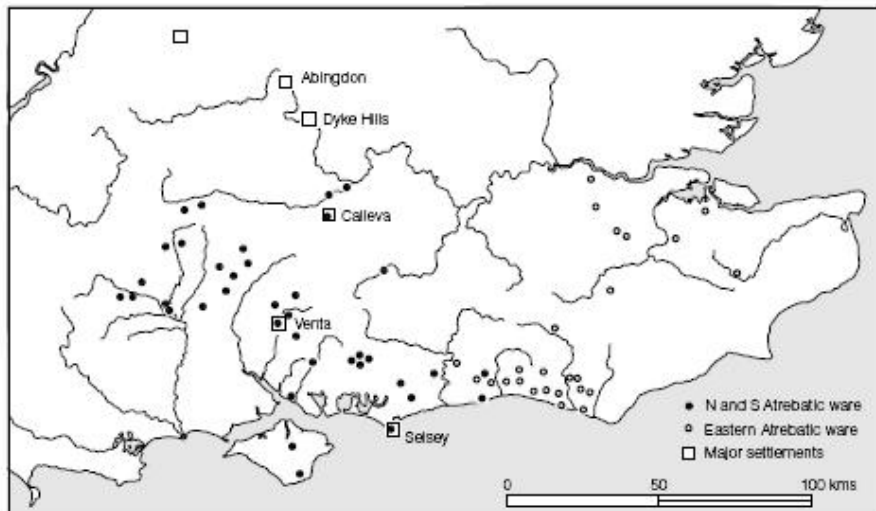


Figure 7.17 *Distribution of Atrebat pottery (source: author).*

The three broadly defined ceramic zones probably owe their identity partly to the indigenous folk tradition and partly to the distributional ranges of the production centres, but it is conceivable that the regionalization in the later period also reflects a political fragmentation and realignment. On coin evidence it is possible to postulate the spread of Trinovantian/Catuvel- launian control over much of the north-west zone, centred particularly upon the valley of the River Kennet. It is in this region that the two south-eastern style burials were discovered, the bucket burial from Marlborough and the barrow cremation at Hurstbourne Tarrant. Furthermore, coins of Tasciovanus and Cunobelin are as common here as those of the later Atrebat rulers.

The evidence from East Sussex is less dramatic, but we have already seen that the influence of the Aylesford-Swarling culture of Kent can be detected, and to this can be added the fact that a number of Aylesford-Swarling pots are found on the South Downs sites. More impressive, however, is the fate of the hillforts in the first century AD. Several of the East Sussex and Wealden sites, like those of Kent, show evidence of continuous occupation. This impression of unrest, and very probably an anti-Roman outlook, in the east contrasts noticeably with the south-western Atrebat Zone of West Sussex and Hampshire, where not only were the old hill- forts abandoned but there is ample historical evidence of a pro-Roman alliance. Some support for the significance of this evidence is provided by the situation in the north-west zone, where again many of the hillforts were occupied and some

refortified. In summary, it is not unreasonable to suppose that by the time of Verica the northern part of the original kingdom had come under the domination of dynasts from north of the Thames while the eastern part had realigned itself politically with the Kentish kingdoms, leaving only the central area in the hands of the original dynasty.

The coin evidence suggests that the greater Atrebatian region can be divided into six socioeconomic zones (Figure 7.2) in three of which urban settlements are known: *Calleva*, *Venta* and Selsey. In the easternmost zone no convincing centre has yet been identified, unless Castle Hill, Newhaven, or the Devil's Dyke once served some central-place function. The Surrey-based zone, centred on the rivers Mole and Wey, is also without a known focus, but in the western zone in Wiltshire there is some evidence to suggest a major centre in the Marlborough district at Forest Hill close to the location of the Roman town of *Cunetio*.

The exact nature of the Selsey centre is a matter for some speculation, but in general terms there are marked similarities between this region and the site of Camulodunum. The nucleus of the settlement probably lay in the region of Selsey Bill, where extensive coastal erosion has removed most of the evidence apart from large quantities of coins and fragments of gold washed up on the shore. The entire peninsula is protected by a series of dykes running across the gravel terrace between the valleys of the south-flowing streams, while the lines of the valleys themselves are further strengthened by north-south earthworks (Figure 7.18). As the result of a detailed survey, Bradley (1971a) has postulated three major phases of defence protecting progressively smaller territories, though the intention throughout was clearly to defend the whole peninsula between the Lavant and the streams flowing into Bosham harbour – that is, to protect the farmland belonging to the oppidum as well as the main nucleated settlement and its satellite farms. It was within the northern part of this territory that the Roman town of Chichester (*Noviomagus Regnensium*) was subsequently built, together with the large palatial building 1.6 km away at Fishbourne, which has tentatively been ascribed to the client king Togidubnus. Several settlements are known within the area, as well as a cremation cemetery at Westhampnett.

The nucleus of the northern centre, *Calleva*, was subsequently buried beneath the Roman town of *Calleva Atrebatum* (Silchester) but its existence has long been attested by the discovery of large numbers of Celtic coins together with quantities of pre-Roman pottery, including imported amphorae, Gallo-Belgic wares and Arretine vessels (Boon 1969). A major campaign of excavations beneath the Roman basilica has exposed evidence of the settlement layout (Fulford and Timby 2000). The site lies on a tongue of gravel projecting between

West End Brook and the Silchester Brook (Figure 7.19). Numerous earthworks exist in the area, but none can be dated with precision though a date in the second half of the first century BC seems likely. If this is so then it could be that enclosure began at the time when Commius I or Commius II was establishing himself in the northern Hampshire–Berkshire region. The lengths of massive earthwork which command the approach to the promontory are likely to belong to a subsequent, but pre- Roman, phase. They are similar to the dykes comprising the territorial oppida at Selsey and Camulodunum.

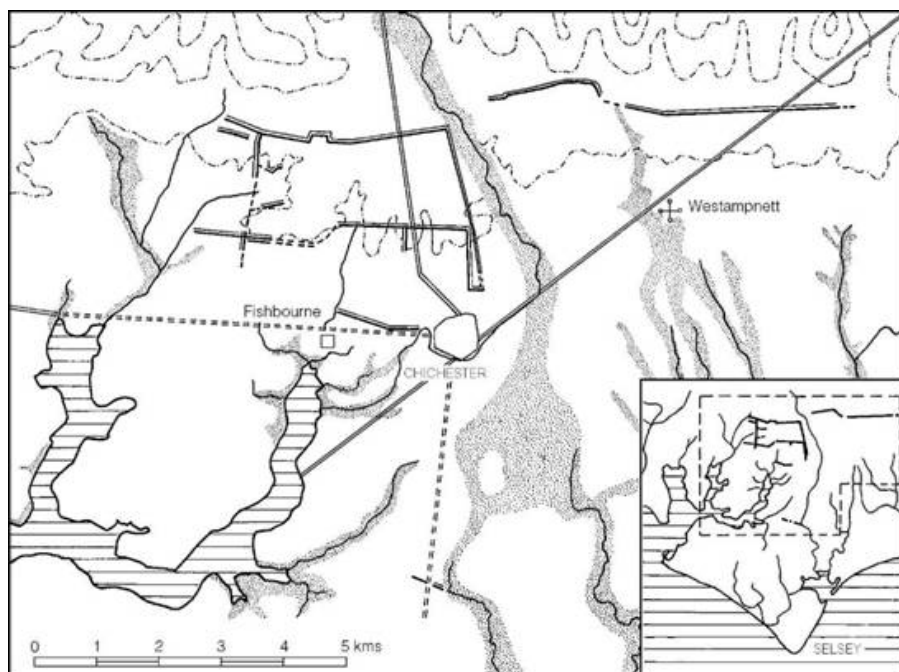


Figure 7.18 *The entrenchments in the vicinity of Chichester, Sussex (source: Bradley 1971a with additions).*

The basilica excavation has defined two major phases of occupation, the first dating c. 25– c. 15 BC, represented by a number of gullies belonging to circular houses and wells, and the second beginning c. 15 BC when a road grid was laid out to serve a series of rectangular timber buildings. This was presumably the capital of Tincommius and Eppillus, and it was from here that Eppillus minted his coins with the mint marks CALLEV and CALLE. The finds recovered show that *Calleva* was a high-status site enjoying quantities of coins and metalwork together with an impressive range of imported pottery.

An analysis of the pottery has suggested that in the later period *Calleva* shared in the economic systems of eastern Britain, a fact

further emphasized by the density of coins of Tascio- vanus and Cunobelin in the region. It is tempting to see this as an economic reorientation coming about in the last decades of the first century BC which eventually, c. AD 35, led the Tri- novantian leader to establish his authority over the region and mint his coins from the capital.

The third oppidum, at *Venta Belgarum* (Winchester), lies largely beneath the Roman town ([Figure 15.38](#), p. 404). Intensive occupation of the valley side began in the second to first centuries BC during the currency of saucepan pots. At this time a bank and ditch were constructed to enclose on the north, west and south sides an area in excess of 14 ha. The eastern limit is not known, but it is conceivable that the earthworks simply ran down the hill and terminated on the edge of the marshy river valley. Occupation within the enclosure was probably continuous, but by the first half of the first century AD the nucleus had moved further towards the river, where fragments of coin moulds and quantities of Gallo-Belgic pottery suggest a settlement of some importance.

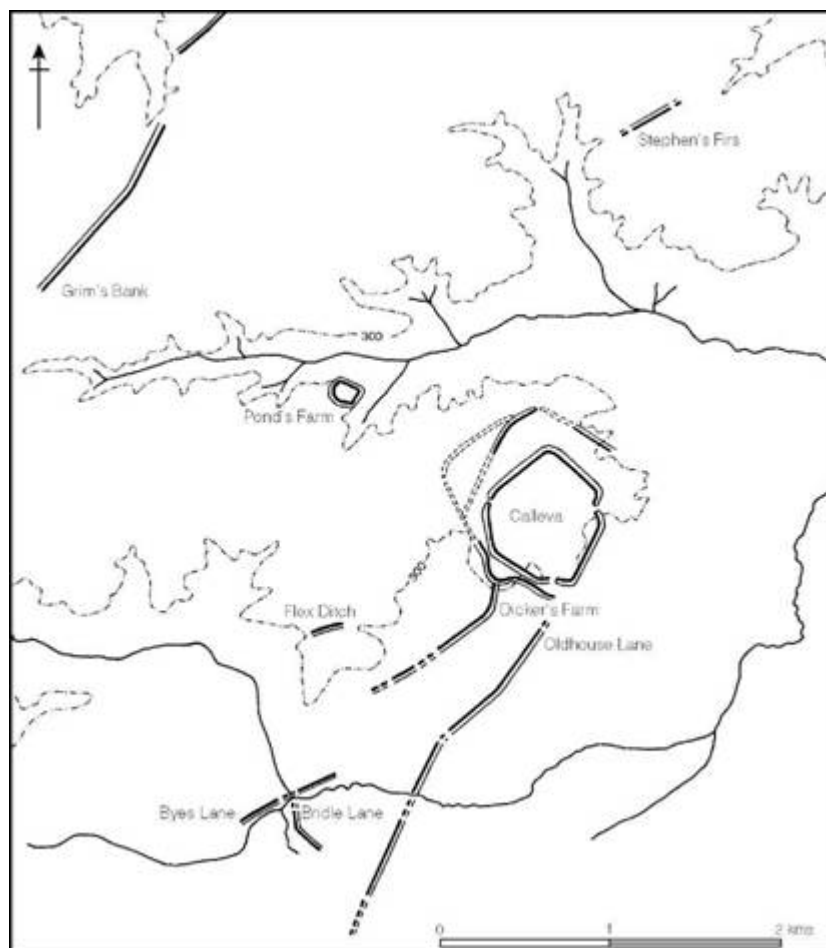


Figure 7.19 *The site of Calleva, Hants (sources: Boon 1969; Fulford 1986).*

The three Atrebatian oppida so far considered may all have begun to be occupied in the pre- Caesarian period, but their siting and subsequent development show that they were not hillforts in the strict sense of the word. Some earlier hillforts did, however, continue to be maintained (Figure 7.20). At Bury Hill, Hants, the original enclosure was remodelled in bivallate form, while at Boscombe Down West, Wilts., and Suddern Farm, Hants, bivallate enclosures of similar type were constructed in the first century AD on earlier sites previously occupied. Chisbury, Wilts., may also belong to this class. Elsewhere in Wiltshire at Yarnbury, Ebsbury, Oldbury, etc., the earlier defensive circuits continued in use, but nothing is known of any refortification. In all probability the occupation within these old enclosures was of a domestic kind and need have been little more than peasant farms making use of the old earthworks as convenient boundaries. This was clearly the case at Danebury and Balksbury. The large double-ditched enclosures of Boscombe Down West type are altogether different and may represent the residences of the tribal élite. The excavations at Suddern Farm suggested that the settlement in this period may have been of high status.

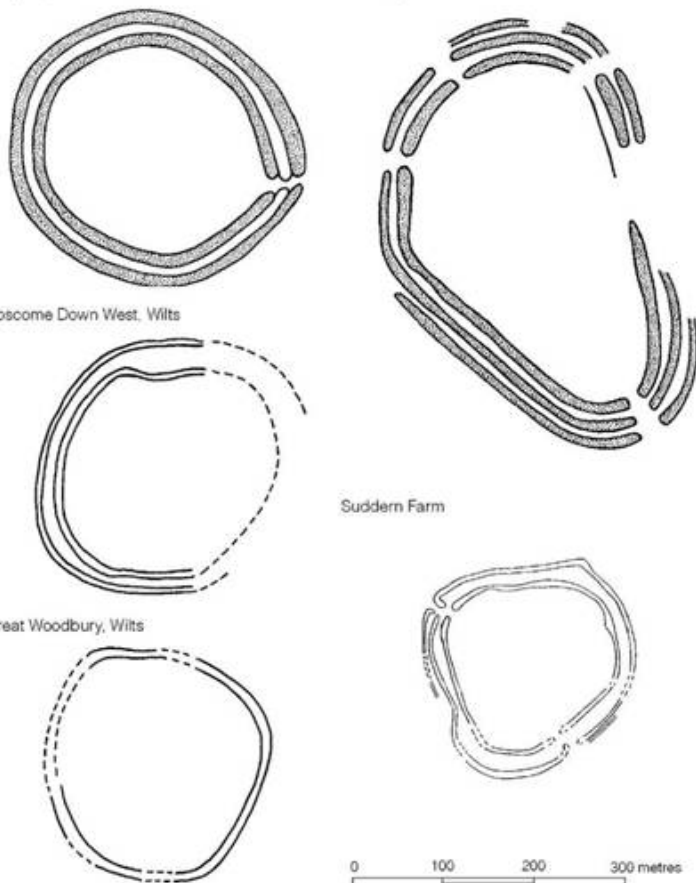


Figure 7.20 *Atrebatic enclosures (sources: various).*

Rather less is known of the settlement sites of this period, largely because excavations have seldom been on a large enough scale to uncover a reasonable sample of the ground plan, but at Worthy Down and Owslebury in Hampshire and at Casterley in Wiltshire substantial areas have been exposed, together with sufficient evidence to demonstrate a continuity of occupation from the time of the saucepan pot tradition. These sites comprise complexes of ditched enclosures designed to create corral space as well as habitation areas (p. 248).

Burial rites within the Atrebatic area varied considerably. At Owslebury and St Lawrence, Isle of Wight, inhumation burials of warriors with their swords and shields were recorded in La Tène III contexts. In the northern part of the region, however, the Trinovantian/Catuvellaunian style of cremation was practised, for example at Marlborough and Hurstbourne Tarrant, and over most of the rest of the area cremation was the general rule. The most

thoroughly excavated and published of the cemeteries is that found at Westhampnett, West Sussex, to the north-east of Chichester. Here a ritual site comprising 161 cremations, several pyre sites and four structures identified as possible shrines were located, representing activity over a period of some four decades, c. 90–50 BC. The early date for the beginning of the cemetery may suggest that the rite was introduced directly from neighbouring regions of northern Gaul, perhaps as the result of an influx of Belgae into the Solent region around 100 BC, and was, therefore, separate from the cremation tradition of the Aylesford–Swarling tradition.

Summary

In the Late Iron Age the core zone of south-eastern Britain was dominated by two dynastic kingdoms, the Trinovantes/Catuvellauni north of the Thames and the Atrebates (and their immediate predecessors) to the south, with the lesser tribe, the Cantii of Kent, lying between. The north–south divide was an unstable one: the numismatic evidence suggests that the northern dynasty established authority over the Middle Thames region and eventually dominated Berkshire and northern Hampshire, and the entire territory of the Cantii. To what extent this expansion of influence was purely economic or involved political dominance it is difficult to say. At any event the classical writers believed that the British tribes were in a state of perpetual warfare, and refugees from the various royal households fleeing to the emperor must have encouraged this view.

The cultural development over much of the core area followed similar lines: the skills of the metalworkers increased and there was a marked technical improvement in pottery manufacture with the introduction of the potter's wheel. There is also evidence for the intensification of production not only in pottery-making but in salt extraction on coastal sites and ironworking in the Weald. This increase must, to some extent, have been encouraged by the development of trade with the Continent through the east coast ports. In return luxury goods from the Roman empire poured in and were used in complex patterns of exchange to maintain, and enhance, the status of the aristocracy. The concentration of luxury goods in Essex and Hertfordshire, now preserved mainly in élite burials, provides a clear indication of where the centres of power lay.

In the southern zone the Atrebates and the Cantii benefited little from the wealth-generating trade: amphora burials of Welwyn type are unknown and even lower-status bucket burials are rare. One possible explanation for this is that, in the political settlement which followed Caesar's campaign in Britain, the southern tribes were

regarded as hostile and trading monopolies were established to reward Roman allies in eastern Britain. Some such explanation is needed to account for the decline in the wine trade originally passing through Hengistbury on the Solent coast, and its rapid development, in post-war times, now focusing on the Essex coastal ports.

In spite of the apparent disparity in trading opportunities, large nucleated settlements (oppida) developed in all parts of the south-east, usually on route nodes where the movement of goods could be more easily controlled. At many of these sites coins were minted, and there is evidence of such a range and intensity of activity that we can fairly regard them as serving urban functions. Proto-urban or urban centres and complex systems of coinage involving a set of denominations show that the south-east was fast acquiring a market economy at the moment when Rome struck.

8

The tribes of the periphery Durotriges, Dobunni, Icenii and Corieltauvi

In the Late Iron Age the core zone of south-eastern Britain was fringed by four coin-issuing tribes, the Durotriges, the Dobunni, the Icenii and the Corieltauvi, the numismatic history of each of which was quite distinct from that of its neighbours. The gross distribution of coins of these peripheral tribes ([Figure 8.2](#)) is interesting. Not only are tribal boundaries quite closely adhered to but remarkably few peripheral coins are found in the core territory. While this could be thought to imply that there was little intercourse between the core and the periphery it is far more likely to mean that peripheral coinage was unacceptable in the core territories and was melted down for reminting. The reverse is less evident and in the territory of the Dobunni and Corieltauvi, Atrebatian and Trinovantian/Catuvellaunian coins are by no means rare. Such issues no doubt had value in intertribal exchanges. The western fringes of the peripheral tribes are far less easy to define since their boundaries are with non-coin-using neighbours. Even so the distribution maps suggest a fairly rapid fall off.

The Durotriges ([Figure 8.3](#))

The Durotriges were a close-knit confederacy of smaller units centred upon modern Dorset. To the east and north their boundaries with the Atrebates seem to have been marked by the Avon and its tributary the Wylfe. The New Forest may have formed something of a buffer zone between the two tribes. Further west Durotrigan coins and pottery extend along the valleys of the Yeare and the Parrett, giving the tribe a narrow outlet to the Bristol Channel. The River Brue would approximate to a northern boundary with the Dobunni and it may be that the marsh-edge settlement of Meare served as a market centre on the interface between the two. The western boundary with the Dumnonii lies roughly on the line from the Parrett estuary to the River Axe. The territory thus defined exhibits a considerable degree of

cultural unity, with marked dissimilarities to the cultures of the neighbouring Dumnonii, Dobunni and Atrebates.

The history of the Durotriges can be divided into two broad phases, an *early phase*, roughly 100–60 BC and a *late phase* from 60 BC until the Roman Conquest. The early phase was a time of rapid development brought about by overseas trade while the late phase was a time of retraction, isolation and economic impoverishment.



Figure 8.1 *The tribes of southern Britain (sources: various).*

The background to the development of overseas trade c. 100 BC or a little before will be discussed in more detail below (pp. 247–80). Suffice it to say that a major trading axis was established, linking the Solent ports of Hengistbury and Poole Harbour to the north Breton trading stations and, through them, to the Atlantic trading network. The most important of the British ports lay on the northern shore of Hengistbury Head, overlooking the tranquil waters of Christchurch Harbour (Figures 8.5 and 8.6). Here, within the protection of the double dykes which cut off the neck of the promontory, there developed a complex entrepôt with a spacious anchorage, improved by the construction of hards for beaching ships, admirably sited to

control the two main river routes into the heart of Wessex. Excavation has shown a concentration of Late Iron Age activity stretching for a kilometre along the shore. Evidence for long-distance trade comes in the form of large quantities of Dressel 1 amphorae, mostly of the 1A type, in which north Italian wine was imported in the first half of the first century BC. Among the other commodities brought in at this time were raw purple and yellow glass and dried figs: no doubt there were many other luxury goods of a kind which leave no trace in the archaeological record.



Figure 8.2 *Distribution of the coins of the four peripheral tribes (source: CCI 2003).*

The range of commodities amassed for export was considerable.

Metals are attested by evidence of smelting and refining. Iron ore was available locally from the headland itself. Copper and tin ore were imported from the West Country and were smelted in the same crucibles to make bronze: a massive block of high-silver copper ore from the borders of Dartmoor was recorded weighing 4 kg. High-silver lead from the Mendips was also imported and was refined by cupellation to produce silver, while gold, in the form of scrap, was stockpiled. In addition to the metalworking activity there is evidence to suggest the manufacture of shale armlets, the extraction of salt and the amassing of quantities of grain brought in from the Wessex hinterland. An unexpectedly high percentage of cows' teeth (bones are poorly preserved at the site) could hint at the value of hides and salt meat for export.

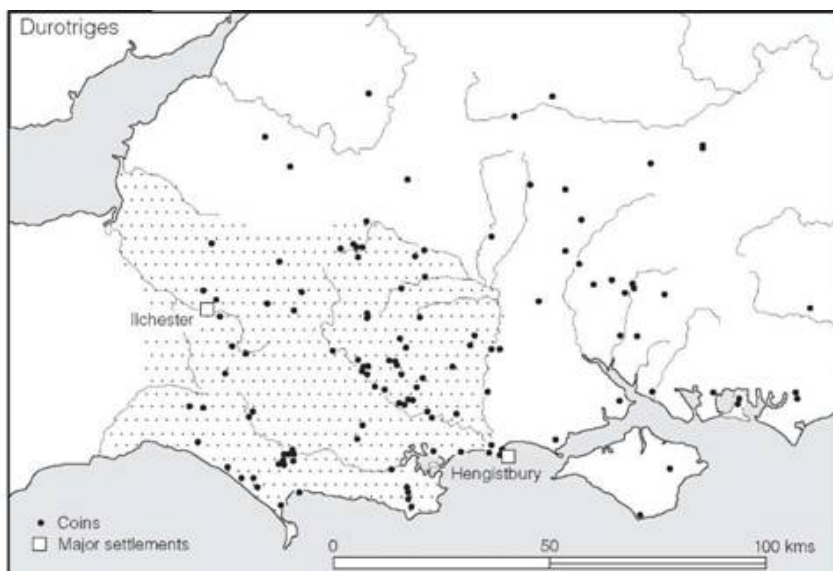


Figure 8.3 *The territory of the Durotriges (sources: author and CCI 2003).*

The acquisition of such a range of commodities by those controlling the Hengistbury entrepôt implies well-developed trade networks not only with the hinterland of Wessex but further afield to the metal-rich areas of the south-west. The river Stour provided access both to the Mendips and, via the Parrett, to the Bristol Channel and the metal resources of south Wales, while the south coast route conveniently linked the south-west peninsula with its supplies of copper, tin and cattle to the Solent ports. Hengistbury served various functions: it was not only a place where raw materials could easily be collected together for export but it also supported a range of specialists who could add value to the materials by refining them and manufacturing

consumer durables.

The southern orientation of Hengistbury's overseas links is amply demonstrated by a range of imported Armorican coins and pottery. Most prolific were coins of the Coriosolites, whose territory lay in the Côtes-d'Armor focused on the estuary of the river Rance and the Baie de Saint-Brieuc. Others came from several north-western French tribes: the Osismii, Namnetes, Aulerci Diablintes, Abricatui and Baiocasses. Large quantities of Armorican pottery were also recovered, principally the black cordoned wares made in the territory of the Coriosolites ([Figure A:33](#)), but with high percentages of graphite-coated wares and rilled micaceous wares coming from other parts of Brittany. Together this evidence leaves little doubt that the long-distance trade, emanating from the Roman-controlled Mediterranean coast of France, was effected by middlemen providing short-haul links between a network of ports along the Atlantic route. Hengistbury's immediate trading partner was evidently the Coriosolites whose principal port lay at Saint-Servin close to Saint-Malo in the Rance estuary.

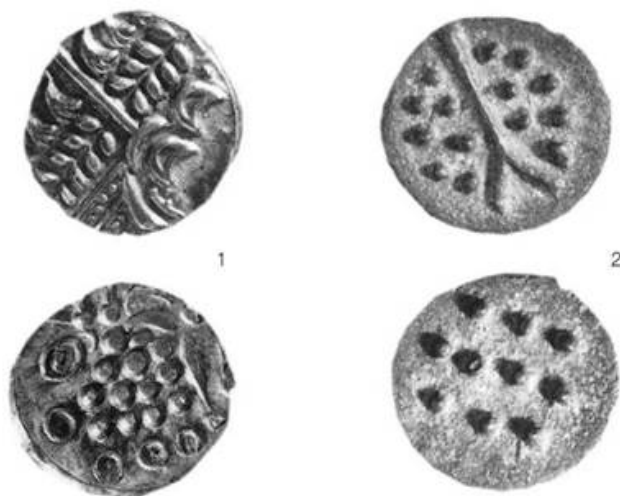


Figure 8.4 Coins of the Durotriges: 1 silver stater; 2 cast bronze unit; twice actual size (photograph: Institute of Archaeology, Oxford).

The archaeological evidence from Hengistbury suggests that after the middle of the first century BC trade along the Atlantic route dwindled dramatically and all but dried up. The immediate reason was probably Caesar's harsh treatment of the Armorican tribes in 56 BC following their rebellion, but in the long term the virtual monopoly of overseas trade which the tribes of eastern Britain seem to have captured provides a plausible explanation. The Gallic War

therefore marks the end of the period of Durotrigan prosperity and heralds nearly a century of economic and cultural isolation. This is well demonstrated by the history of Durotrigan coinage. In the decades immediately before the Caesarian campaigns a gold standard had been adopted, and was maintained during the early stages of the war, for external trade, but already, for local use, a debased coinage of white gold was being produced. Immediately after the war the coinage was further debased: the gold content soon disappeared altogether and then the percentage of silver began to be reduced until about 30 BC, by which time the issues were entirely of bronze (Figure 8.4). Along with this economic collapse came growing cultural isolation.

One effect of the brief period of overseas trade was to introduce into Durotrigan territory an improved ceramic technology involving the potter's wheel. At first copies of imported north-west French black cordoned wares were made for internal trading purposes but soon a wide range of types was being produced. The local assemblage is distinctive and shows little variation across the region (Figure A:36). The commonly occurring forms include shallow bowls with straight or slightly convex sides, a bead lip and a foot-ring base; high-shouldered bead-rimmed bowls; necked-bowls; large jars with or without countersunk handles; handled tankards; and occasionally tazze. Decoration is usually restricted to simple wavy lines, cross-hatched zones and sometimes the use of dots or rouletting. With very few exceptions, the forms can all be traced back to traditions current in the area in the preceding period, the main difference being that much of the material was now wheel-finished. A few of the vessels, like the tankards, probably developed as copies of metal or wood-and-metal containers, while others, such as the necked bowls and tazze, may well have been inspired by imported north-western French types. The general impression given by Durotrigan ceramics is that production was now largely centralized: fabric analysis has suggested that the main centre lay in the vicinity of Poole Harbour.

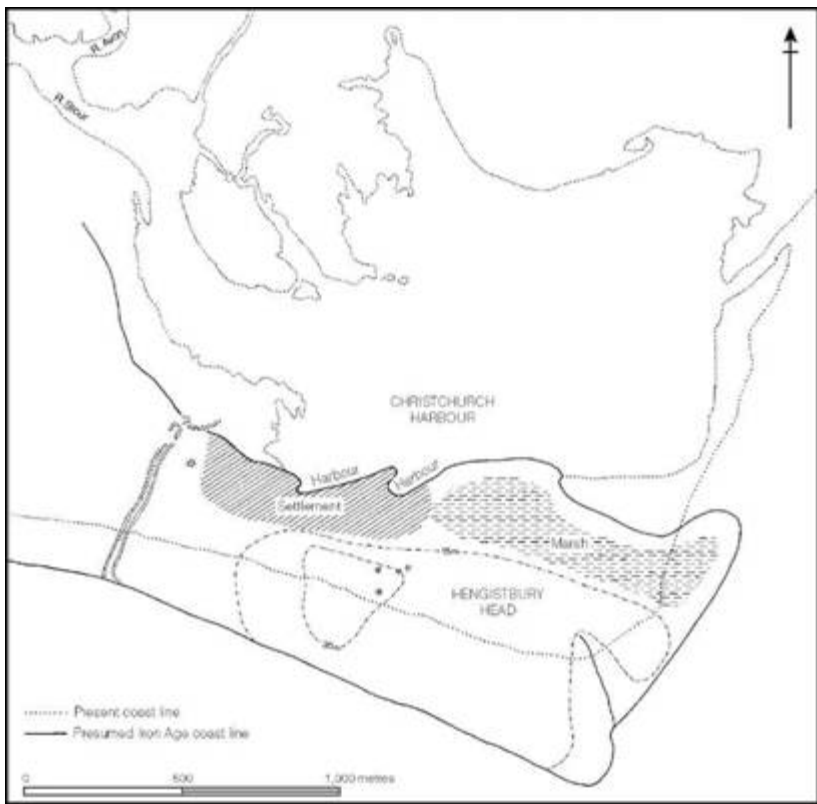


Figure 8.5 Hengistbury Head, Dorset (source: Cunliffe 1987).

The decline in the importance of the port of Hengistbury in the middle of the first century BC appears to be matched by a rise in activity in Poole Harbour. Breton pottery and Roman Dressel 1A amphorae found at various points on the south side of the harbour show that already cross-Channel trade was developing in the first half of the first century BC (Cunliffe and de Jersey 1997, 64–5) and a harbour work or jetty of some kind was already in use running between Cleavel Point and Green Island (Markey *et al.* 2002). In the later first century BC and early first century AD there is ample evidence to show that imported pottery, and no doubt other goods, was reaching settlements in the area on Cleavel Point and Furzey Island (Cox and Hearne 1991) via the Atlantic trading routes, but the volume of that trade appears to have decreased dramatically as new trading networks between Roman Gaul and the Essex coast came into operation.



Figure 8.6 Aerial view of Hengistbury Head, Dorset (photograph: K. Hoskins).

Unlike the Atrebatian and the Aylesford–Swarling regions, where large newly built oppida surrounded by defensive dykes played an increasingly important part in centralizing political power, in the Durotrigan territory trends towards urbanization remained focused on the old hillforts. At Maiden Castle, the 18 ha enclosure was tidied up, streets were metalled and defences were maintained in good order, while the close-packed houses continued to be inhabited and rebuilt. An even more impressive demonstration of a Late Iron Age nucleated settlement is the fort on Hod Hill ([Figure 8.7](#)). Within its 21 ha fortified area, the one wedge-shaped quadrant which has escaped modern ploughing is covered with traces of small circular huts, some of them with annexed enclosed yards and many associated with storage pits. Spacing tends to be haphazard but several well-defined street lines can be traced. While it is evident even from the ground survey that not all the huts were in use at the same time, selective excavation has shown that many were occupied during the last decades before the Roman invasion. The excavated sample is not large enough to permit firm conclusions, but it indicates a rapid increase in resident population after c. 50 BC, developing into what can only be described as a town by the time of the invasion.

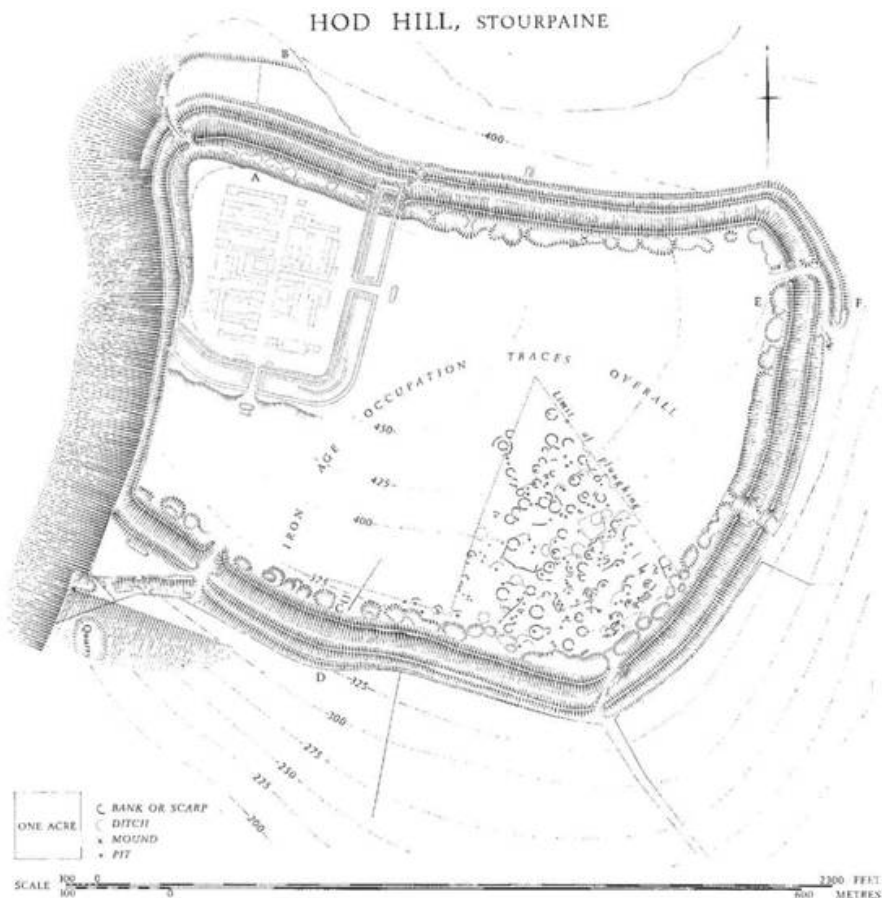


Figure 8.7 Hod Hill, Dorset (source: reproduced from RCHM Dorset vol. 3).

The individual houses were each built within a penannular drainage ditch c. 9–10.5 m in diameter (Figure 8.8). The superstructure consisted simply of a circular setting of upright posts set into the natural chalk and packed around with a low wall of chalk rubble, giving a living area of up to 6 m in diameter unimpeded by central supports. Many of the huts seem to have been provided with a cupboard immediately inside the door on the left-hand side, where weapons could be placed. In two of the huts this space was occupied by a bag of slingstones, and presumably the sling; in another it contained a group of harness-fittings; while in the fourth a spear was placed in the same position. Several of the huts were set within an attached yard, defined by an arc-shaped ditch and low bank. In the case of hut 56 the enclosure housed a rectangular stable suitable for two or three horses, with a space beside it adequate for parking a cart.

Hut 36 was unusual in that it lay in the corner of a sub-rectangular palisaded enclosure some 21 m across, the rest of the enclosed area containing timber structures of undefined form. Since it was this hut that appears to have been singled out for bombardment by Roman ballistae at the time of the invasion, the excavator may well be correct in his assumption that it was a chieftain's residence (Richmond 1968). Its siting, in a prominent position close to the main street which ran towards the principal gate of the fort, is indicative of its importance.

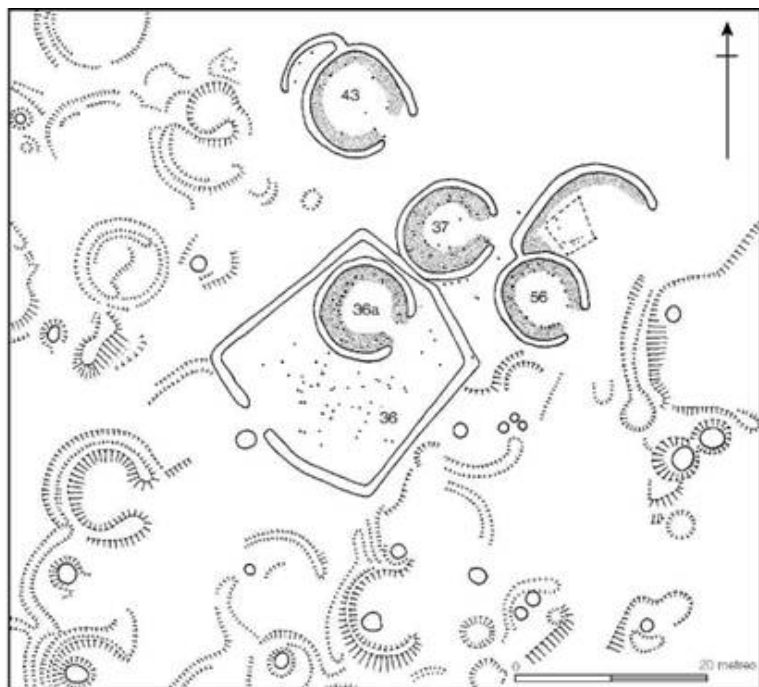


Figure 8.8 *Interior settlement at Hod Hill, Dorset, partly excavated (source: Richmond 1968).*

Maiden Castle and Hod Hill are not unique among the Dorset forts. Hambledon Hill, for example, appears from a ground survey to have been equally as densely occupied as Hod, and excavations at South Cadbury, Somerset, have demonstrated a similar urban aspect in the immediate pre-Roman period, when the old Middle Iron Age defences were refurbished. The evidence is now sufficiently strong to leave little doubt that many, if not most, of the Durotrigan forts were in active use in AD 43; it was, after all, across this territory that Vespasian had to force his way, destroying one hillfort after another.

Localized defence based on the forts does not necessarily mean that all the forts were permanently occupied on a large scale. It could be

argued that the countryside population fled to the protection of the defences only when the threat of Roman attack occurred; indeed, it would be surprising if some such movement did not take place, swelling the population within. Just to the north of Maiden Castle air photography and limited excavation has demonstrated a very considerable apparently unenclosed settlement of Late Iron Age date. It could well be that this was now the centre of nucleated population, leaving the old hillfort only sparsely occupied but conveniently close, to be used and refortified in times of danger.

The possibility of a general movement from hillforts to valley locations is further suggested by the recognition of what may be an enclosed oppidum at Wincepool Meadow in the vicinity of Ilchester, 6 km north of the hillfort of Ham Hill (Figure 8.9). Without excavation, however, it is difficult to say more of the potential relationship of the two sites.

The nature of Durotrigan settlement in the countryside is best demonstrated by four sites, all in Cranborne Chase: Tollard Royal, Rotherley, Woodcuts and Gussage All Saints (Figure 12.4). Of these Tollard Royal provides the clearest picture, partly because it has been totally excavated and partly because it was not encumbered by a Roman phase of occupation. The economy of the farm lies well within the tradition of downland and mixed farming stretching back to the second millennium and must represent a typical homestead farm worked by a single family. The adjacent farms of Rotherley and Woodcuts are in much the same tradition, but would appear to represent somewhat larger establishments, perhaps holdings belonging to extended families (Hawkes 1948). The early date of these excavations and the subsequent Roman occupation prevent a more detailed assessment of the Iron Age phase of settlement. However, at Gussage All Saints, the near total excavation of an Iron Age enclosure has provided an impressive example of a farmstead beginning life in the Early Iron Age and continuing in use until the Roman period. There is a marked contrast between the large ditched enclosure of the Early–Middle Iron Age and the cluster of small enclosures, so typical of Late Iron Age farms, which replaced it. The change must imply some shift in the socio-economic systems underlying settlement pattern but these are at present difficult to discern.

The aspects of Durotrigan culture so far considered owe practically nothing to influences derived from the Aylesford–Swarling culture of the south-east. This regionalism is further demonstrated by the continuance of the rite of inhumation, not only until the Roman invasion but for some time afterwards. The famous war cemetery at Maiden Castle provides dramatic evidence for burial ritual in the hours following the Roman attack. The dead, thirty-eight of them,

were all interred, somewhat hurriedly to judge by the positions of the bodies, but many of them were provided with a ritual meal contained in a pottery vessel placed beside the body in the grave. Rather less ceremony attended the mass burial at Spettisbury, where more than eighty bodies were thrown into a single pit, but this may conceivably have been a Roman tidying-up operation after a battle rather than an example of native burial practice.

The only three rich burials from the Durotrigan area were also inhumations. One, from Whitcombe near Dorchester, was the burial of a male warrior complete with sword, spear, La Tène II fibula, strap-rings, a spindle whorl and a hammer. The others were both mirror burials. The best known, from Portesham, Dorset, was the burial of a woman, aged between 26 and 45 years, who was buried with a decorated bronze mirror, brooches, a toilet set and part of a Roman strainer. The burial dates to the period immediately after the Roman Conquest. The other, from West Bay near Bridport, was probably also a female burial but all that remained were a few human bones, a pot and the handle of a mirror, exposed in a cliff-fall. All three burials are encompassed within the traditions practised over much of southern Britain and appear to owe little to any particular regional culture or to intrusive elements.

While it is true to say that Durotrigan culture developed in its own characteristic way, little influenced by its eastern neighbours, trading networks were nevertheless maintained. The production of armlets and vessels of Kimmeridge shale became a not inconsiderable cottage industry on the Isle of Purbeck (Calkin 1949). Both finished products and raw shale were exported over some distance, to the Trinovantian/Catuvellaunian area, for example – where it was turned into the elegant pedestal urns and tazze found in several of the rich burials (Denford and Riding 1991). Salt extraction too, which had already begun in the early part of the pre-Roman Iron Age, continued along much of the Dorset coast (Farrar 1963, 1975), no doubt as a specialized commercial enterprise. Yet in spite of this the Durotriges remained an isolated body, with an impoverished coinage, showing little sign of wealth accumulation or the emergence of a dominant élite. When the Romans arrived in AD 43 the natives were unified in their hostility but fought piecemeal and were easily overcome.

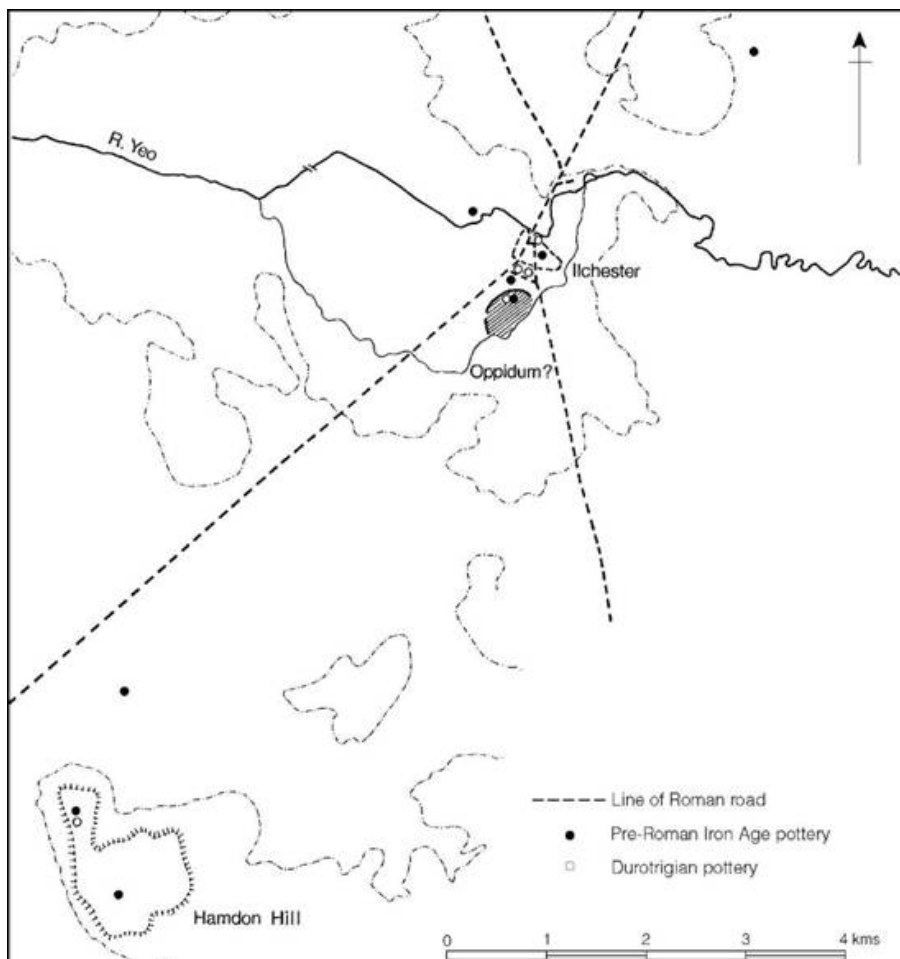


Figure 8.9 Late Iron Age settlement in the vicinity of Ilchester, Somerset (source: Leach and Thew 1985).

The Dobunni (Figure 8.10)

The distribution of Dobunnic coinage places the nucleus of the tribal territory in Gloucestershire, extending into north Somerset down to the river Brue, north and west Wiltshire, Oxfordshire west of the Cherwell, and most of Worcestershire (Hurst 2001). The full extent of this area is defined by the earliest uninscribed gold coinage and continued to be the Dobunnic nucleus until the Roman Conquest (Allen 1961b).

The Dobunni introduced their own coinage in about 35 BC, adopting stylistic motifs from the Atrebatas whose issues they had

previously been content to use (Figure 8.11). Gold was not plentiful at first but silver was comparatively abundant. Some time about 30–20 BC the first of a series of inscribed staters appeared, bearing names which are assumed to be those of local rulers. Various sequences and chronologies have been put forward. The first, by Derek Allen (Allen 1961b), was accepted by Hawkes who used it as the basis of a complex historical interpretation (C.F.C. Hawkes 1961) now best abandoned. Alternative sequences have since been proposed based on a more detailed study (Van Arsdell 1989; Van Arsdell and de Jersey 1994). The most convincing view is that summarized by de Jersey (1996), which argues that the earliest inscribed issues were those bearing the names of CORIO and BODVOC. The coins of Corio are found throughout Dobunnic territory while those of Bodvoc are concentrated in the northern part, suggesting that he may have been the leader of one polity within the larger tribal area. That one of Bodvoc's silver issues is inspired by coins of Tasciovanus might imply a political allegiance with the eastern neighbour some time in the late first century. The next issues bear the names COMUX and CATTI. Issues of Comux are rare but the more common issues of Catti occupy much the same territory as those of Bodvoc, implying the continuation of the north–south divide into the early decades of the first century AD. The last issues, of ANTED, probably followed by EISV, are found over the whole of the Dobunnic territory. This seems to indicate that by c. AD 20–30 the whole of the region had come under a single authority.

The implication of there being two discrete polities in Dobunnic territory, separated roughly along the line of the Bristol Avon, is reflected in a similar division that can be traced in the native pottery and its distribution in the first century BC (Figures 5.5, and 5.7). North of the Bristol Avon the principal types included jars and saucepan pot shapes decorated with a zone of either linear tooling or stamping below the rim, types which petrological examination (Peacock 1968) has shown were manufactured in the Malvern area and exported widely, not only to the communities of the Cotswolds but also to the basically aceramic communities further west in the Welsh borderland (Figure 5.5). The form and style of decoration places these stamped and linear-tooled wares firmly within the saucepan pot tradition of the south. Indeed, it is possible to see over this entire area a convergence of development which could only have occurred had the Severn region been in close contact with the south. It is therefore surely no coincidence that it was over precisely this area that gold staters, based on the Triple Tailed Horse types of the Atrebates, rapidly spread following Caesar's campaigns.

The north Somerset region, on the other hand, was developing a

totally different style of ceramics, growing ultimately out of a linear-tooled saucepan pot tradition and influenced partly by technological developments in the Durotrigan area, but involving a new and vigorous art style which derived some inspiration at least from the ceramics of Cornwall (Figure 5.7). This Somerset version of South-Western Decorated Wares is characterized by necked-bowls, saucepan pots and simple bead-rimmed jars, the best of which are decorated with elaborate curvilinear or geometric designs carried out in shallow tooling, frequently incorporating areas of crosshatching. Most of the Somerset South-Western Decorated Wares were made from clays incorporating grit fillers derived from the Old Red Sandstone, Mendip limestone or Jurassic limestone, all of north Somerset origin (Peacock 1969, 43; 1979).

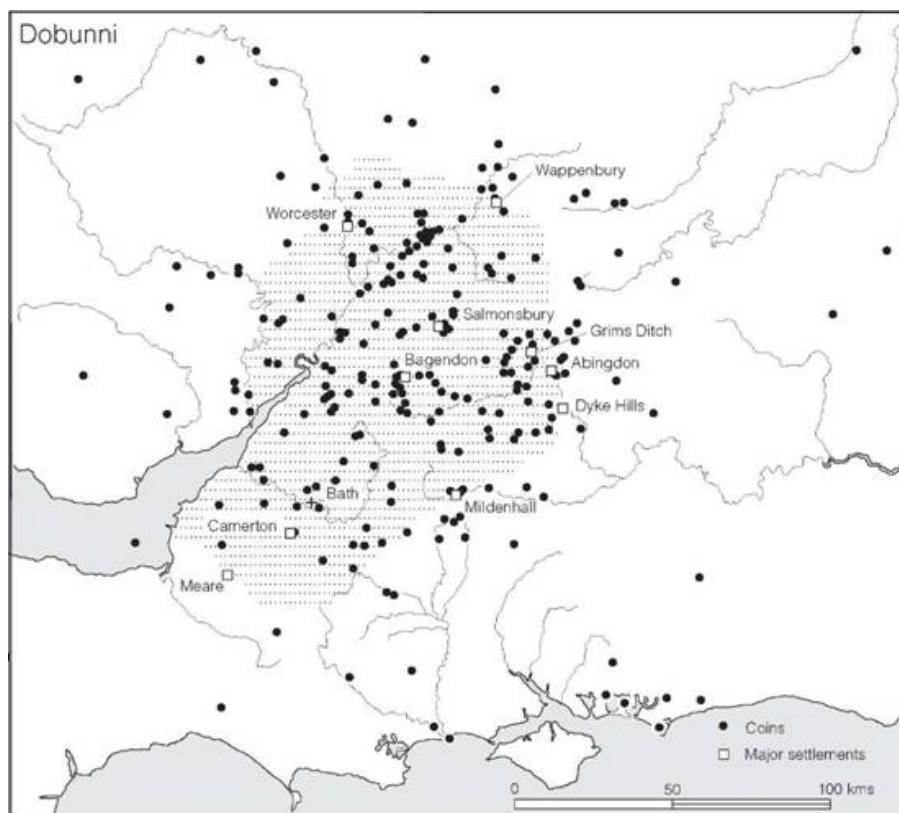


Figure 8.10 *The territory of the Dobunni (sources: author and CCI 2003).*

To what extent the two ceramic styles represent cultural differences is difficult to say. At the very least, however, they must reflect discrete spheres of social or commercial contact. Taken together with the numismatic evidence mentioned above, it could be argued that both

areas retained a degree of identity throughout.



Figure 8.11 Coins of the Dobunni: 1 uninscribed silver unit; 2 Bodvoc, silver unit; twice actual size (photograph: Institute of Archaeology, Oxford).

It is impossible at present to say how long the indigenous traditions of pottery manufacture remained dominant. Wheel-turned south-eastern types occurred to the exclusion of earlier types at Bagendon, Glos., in the first century AD, while at several sites (including Meare, Camerton and Kingsdown Camp in Somerset, and Salmonsbury in Gloucestershire) these south-eastern varieties replace the local types within the decade or two immediately before the conquest. The overall impression given by the present state of our knowledge is that acculturation was slow and patchy, particularly in Somerset, but that ceramics of south-eastern type were being introduced into the east Cotswolds soon after the beginning of the first century AD. Even so, in many areas of the Dobunnian territory native traditions may have continued until the region was eventually subdued in the years following AD 43.

The apparent dual focus reflected in the distribution of pottery and coins strongly suggests the presence of two main 'urban' centres. The northern centre was probably at Bagendon, a promontory of about 80 ha partly encircled by linear ditches (Figure 8.12). At one location excavations have defined evidence of occupation commencing at the beginning of the first century AD and continuing until the 60s, by which time the civilian settlement at the Roman town of Cirencester, 5 km to the south-east, was under way. Although the exact nature and extent of the occupation remains to be defined, evidence for metalworking and the minting of coins, together with the relatively large quantity of Gallo-Belgic imported pottery, strongly suggests an

important settlement, perhaps a tribal oppidum in south-eastern style.

The location of the southern centre is less certain, but there is some evidence to suggest Camerton, where an impressive array of coins, metalwork and Late Iron Age pottery has come to light over the years. Nor should the possibility of secondary markets within the territory or close to the borders be overlooked. Meare may have served such a function on the southern border with the Durotriges (see below, p. 269), while at Worcester a massive defensive ditch was found beneath the town and Iron Age coins cluster in the vicinity. An enclosed oppidum, here on the river Severn, could have served as a focus for articulating exchange between the Dobunni and the neighbouring Cornovii. Other possible border markets include Wappenbury in the Avon valley, Dyke Hills and Abingdon on the Thames and Forest Hill and Mildenhall on the Kennet. Another centre, well within the territory, is Salmonsbury on the river Windrush. Here a substantial defended enclosure was constructed conforming to the type defined as an enclosed oppidum. It was admirably sited to control movement from the Thames valley, through the Cotswolds, to the Severn valley. Finally there is the massive system of linear earthworks known as the North Oxfordshire Grim's Ditch, lying on the edge of the Cotswolds between the rivers Glyme and Evenlode. While a Late Iron Age date seems probable the function of the system remains unknown, but its location, close to the supposed boundary between the Dobunni and the Trinovantes/Catuvellauni (at least in their latest stage of political expansion), is suggestive of a border function. It has also been suggested that a major linear earthwork, Aves Ditch, may demarcate the tribal border (Sauer 1999).

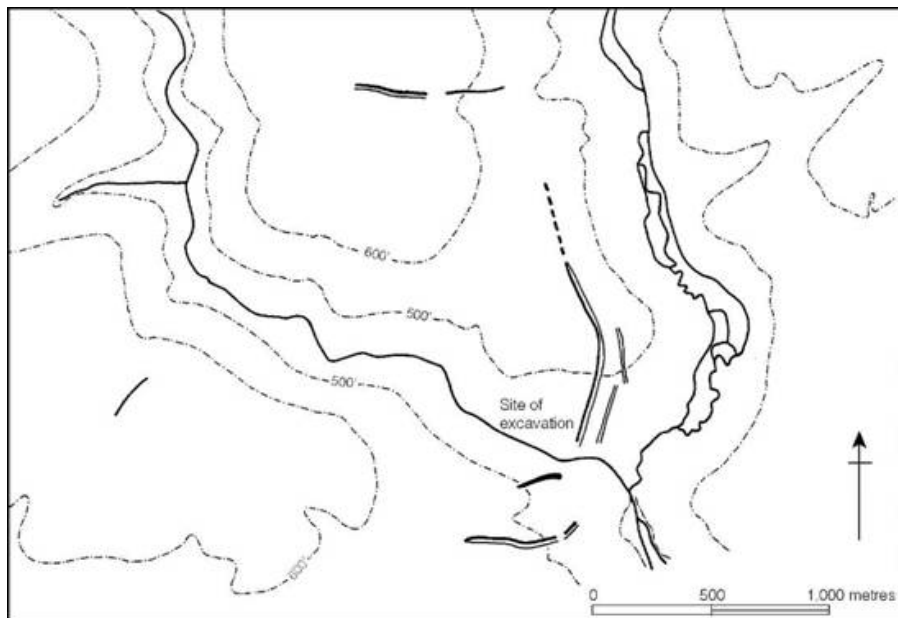


Figure 8.12 *The siting of Bagendon, Glos. (source: Clifford 1961).*

One further site might be considered here – the sacred spring at Bath. The hot water gushing out of the ground close to the valley bottom cannot have failed to have attracted attention. Excavation has shown that the spring was slightly modified in the pre-Roman period so that people could approach the centre to throw offerings, including coins, into the water. The sacred location was given added significance by virtue of its position commanding an excellent crossing point on the river Avon dividing the northern Dobunni from the southern group.

In the remoter areas, hillforts probably continued in use for some time – actively defended, if the evidence for massacres at Bredon Hill, Worcs., and Worlebury, Somerset, is considered to be of this period; but outside the Cotswolds there is little trace of late refortification in the first century AD. This may, however, be due more to the lack of excavation than to lack of continued occupation.

A number of smaller settlements are known but very few have been extensively excavated. Langford Downs, Oxon., however, offers a fairly complete plan of a small farmstead of the first century AD lying on the extreme eastern fringes of the territory. Here two adjacent ditched enclosures both appear to have protected broadly contemporary circular huts, but the full extent of the enclosures could not be traced. Similarities lie with the complex ditched enclosures of the Atrebatian area. Claydon Pike in the Upper Thames valley conforms

to the same general type though is more extensive ([Figure 12.12](#)). At Butcombe in Somerset, on the north flank of the Mendips, a farm of about this date has been excavated, yielding evidence of circular huts and associated pits of the late pre-Roman Iron Age. These belong to the first phase of a farming settlement which continued in occupation well into the Roman period.

The burial practices of the Dobunni are known from relatively few sites. At Barnwood, Glos., a cemetery containing a single inhumation together with a small cremation group suggests a mixture of traditions not necessarily contemporary. The survival of inhumation is further demonstrated by the Birdlip cemetery, Glos., where at least four inhumations were found in stone-lined graves covered by slabs of limestone and buried beneath cairns of stone 1.2–1.5 m high. The principal burial was of a female who was provided with an impressive array of grave-goods, including two bronze bowls, a silver brooch plated with gold, a bronze mirror, a necklace of amber, jet and stone, an animal-headed knife, a tubular bronze bracelet and four bronze rings.

With so little evidence to go on it would be unwise to speculate too far, but the survival of the inhumation rite, here as among the Durotriges, points to a strong indigenous tradition largely unaffected by the Aylesford–Swarling culture of the south-east. The whole question of the relationship of the Dobunni to the Catuvellauni is a difficult one to untangle. While the intricate political history based on Allen's interpretations of the coinage (C.F.C. Hawkes 1961) can no longer be sustained in detail, the coin evidence does suggest close relations with the Atrebates at first, but with an increasing Catuvellaunian involvement beginning in the closing decades of the first century BC. The changes in the ceramic technology of the northern Dobunnian area, and the appearance of increasing quantities of Gallo-Belgic imports, again point to direct contact with the east of Britain increasing in the last few decades before the invasion. The evidence could be interpreted as little more than an intensification of trading contacts but the possibility of some form of political domination cannot be ruled out. After all Dio Cassius was of the view that the Dobunni were subservient to the Catuvellauni at the time of the conquest.

The Corieltavi ([Figure 8.13](#))

The territory of the Corieltavi, as defined by the distribution of their coinage, lay between the rivers Trent and Nene, with a southern border with the Dobunni somewhere to the south of Leicester. The tribe used to be known as the Coritani but the name has been

corrected in the light of new epigraphic evidence (Tomlin 1983).

The coinage of the Corieltauvi shows vigorous and continuous development throughout the period from about 70 BC to the time of the Conquest, with the first dynastic name, VEP, appearing about 10 BC. Thereafter two or three names were commonly inscribed, representing joint rulers or magistrates or else a combination of personal names and mint name (Figure 8.14). The standard of the gold issue was carefully maintained throughout the Gallic War but was eventually reduced to bring it into line with the issues of the southern tribes, and by the end of the war the tribe, like those of the core area, had begun to strike silver to complement the gold, the first issue being based on the style of a contemporary Roman denarius. This would have facilitated trade not only between the tribes of eastern Britain but also with the Continent.

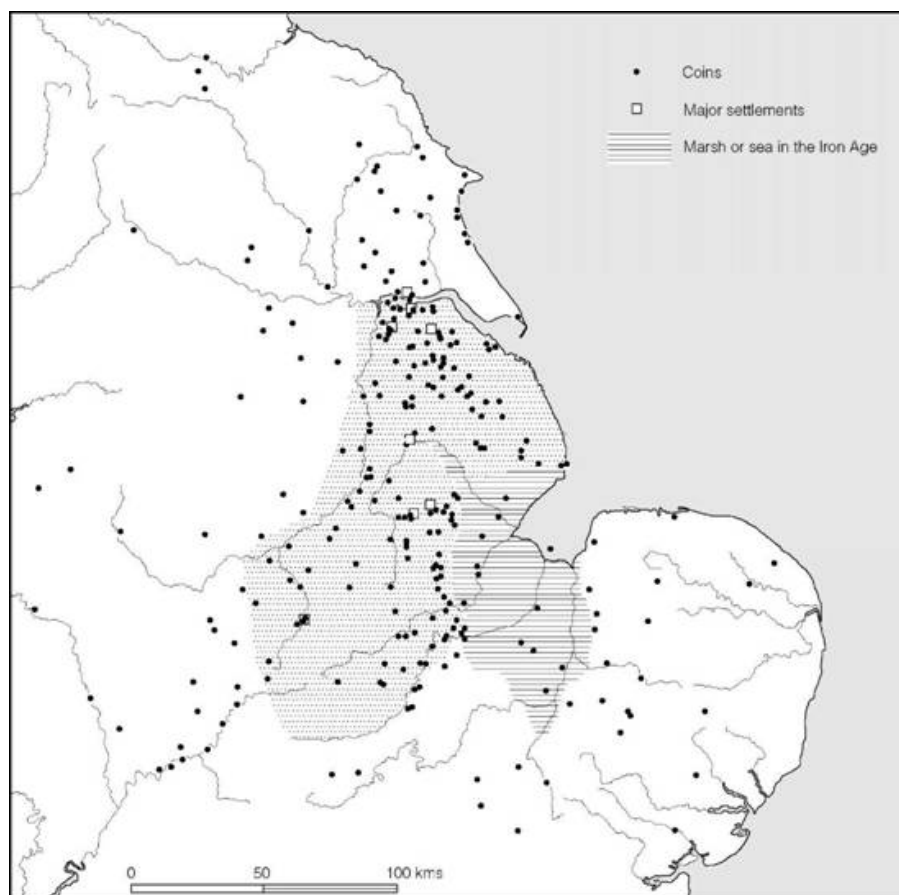


Figure 8.13 *The territory of the Corieltauvi (sources: May 1984 and CCI 2003).*

The ceramic sequence in the region is comparatively well understood (Figure A:28) from three large assemblages, from Ancaster Gap, Old Sleaford and Dragonby. Three phases can be distinguished. In the earliest the fine ware vessels were hand-made or wheel-finished with highly burnished surfaces. Many were decorated with horizontal zones, usually on the shoulders, infilled with geometric or lightly curvilinear designs executed with a roulette wheel and with shallow tooling enhanced with triple impressed dimples. There is considerable variety and the earliest of the pottery from Dragonby differs in detail from the other two sites but can be regarded as belonging to the same broad tradition. The dating of this early assemblage cannot be defined precisely but it probably began around the middle of the first century BC. The second phase, which develops from the first, is characterized by a greater use of the potter's wheel and an increasing uniformity in fabric, suggesting the emergence of centralized production. Decoration is now usually restricted to horizontal zoning defined by grooving and cordons occasionally infilled by simple linear shading. Some forms develop beaded rims and pedestal bases. These types are very similar to the Aylesford–Swarling assemblages of the south-east and imply a close contact between the two areas in the post-war period. This need be little more than a parallel development brought about by increased trading connections as the pace of exchange between Britain and the Continent grew. The third ceramic phase reflects a further intensification of this trend. Alongside developed forms of traditional coarse wares, Gallo-Belgic imports, such as butt-beakers, *terra rubra* and *terra nigra*, appear together with imported amphorae. The locally produced wares now tended to copy imported forms. This phase probably began in the last decade of the first century BC and continued until the invasion.

A number of large nucleated settlements have been discovered within the tribal territory (May 1976a, 1984). At Dragonby, 11 km south of the Humber estuary, a substantial settlement consisting of ditched enclosures and circular houses and covering some 8 ha, has been partly excavated. Considerable quantities of pottery together with La Tène III metalwork and thirty- three Iron Age coins represent intensive occupation beginning about 100 BC and continuing until after the conquest. A similar long sequence was discovered at Old Sleaford, a site of unknown extent which produced 3,000 fragments of clay moulds probably used for making coin blanks.

Two other sites which have some claim to urban status are Leicester (*Ratae*) and Lincoln (*Lindum*), both important Roman towns. At Leicester small quantities of Late Iron Age pottery and metalworking debris have come to light from beneath the Roman settlement, while at Lincoln Late Iron Age occupation has been found just to the south

of the Roman town near Brayford Pool. Although the evidence from both sites is sparse the importance which the two locations attained in the Roman period hints at their potential significance in the pre-Roman period.

Among the other Lincolnshire sites which have yielded unusual quantities of Late Iron Age material are Kirmington, Ancaster, Ludford, Old Winteringham, Owmbly, South Ferriby, Spilsby and Thistleton (May 1984) but in the absence of extensive excavation their status must remain uncertain. Some may be little more than rich farms, others are perhaps religious centres, but some at least are likely to be major markets possibly with urban functions. Of these, South Ferriby, on the southern shore of the Humber estuary, is admirably sited to command the Humber crossing. The discovery of nearly 200 Iron Age coins and an impressive collection of La Tène III brooches and other metalwork hints at a site of considerable significance.

Two other sites of lesser status have been excavated. At Colsterworth, Lincs., a substantial ditched enclosure containing a number of circular houses was uncovered. The associated pottery shows that the site was occupied during the middle of the first century AD, beginning in the pre-Roman period. Since the number of huts occupied at any one time cannot be accurately assessed, the size of the social group is impossible to define, but in all probability the settlement was a small hamlet or a large farm the status of which was indicated by the massiveness of its enclosing ditch. A rather different kind of settlement was excavated at Tallington, near Stamford. Here a number of roughly rectangular ditched enclosures were laid out along the north bank of the River Welland, in the largest of which was a circular house. The general arrangement is that of a typical farmstead.



Figure 8.14 Coins of the Corieltavi: 1 unscripted silver unit; 2 Volisios Dumnocoveros, gold stater; twice actual size (photograph: Institute of Archaeology, Oxford).

A rather more specialized kind of site is represented by the large double-ditched enclosure of Tattershall Thorpe, Lincs., situated on a low terrace overlooking the valleys of the Bain and Witham. The site was in use in the early first century AD but does not appear to have been a habitation. Environmental evidence suggests that it was probably associated with stock grazing. Its location is ideal for access both to summer pasture, on the fen and marsh to the south, and winter grazing on the well-drained sands and gravels of the Bain valley.

No survey of the Corieltavi would be complete without a brief consideration of the coastline. An extensive survey of the Lincolnshire Fens (Simmons 1980) has shown that in the Iron Age the high-tide line was far inland of its present position (Figure 8.13) but at low tide extensive mud flats would have been exposed, with islands of higher ground in between. While such a shore line would have inhibited communication by sea it provided a valuable range of resources. The marsh edge would have made ideal pasture land for cattle or horses, while along the coastal strip there developed a vigorous salt extraction industry. Sea-birds and the fish would not have been overlooked as a resource. This range of products, together with the fertility of the Lincolnshire soils and the ready supplies of high-quality iron ore,

provided the Corieltauvi with a considerable resource potential which could be maximized in order to provide surplus for exchange. The quantities of imported Gallo-Belgic ceramics found on the major settlements and the vigorous, high-quality coinage maintained throughout are indications of their economic stability.

The Icenī (Figure 8.15)

The territory of the Icenī, as defined by the distribution of their coins, centred on Norfolk, stretching westward to the river Nene and southwards probably to the watershed between the Waveney and the Stour. The coinage issued in the area was highly innovative from the beginning (Figure 8.16). The earliest coinage, developing from the Gallo-Belgic C stater, depicted a vigorous wolf, perhaps reflecting a tribal totem, but some time around 40 BC the horse was reintroduced in a variety of localized issues. During this period a number of silver units were minted, some of them bearing highly distinctive heads, and new types with a boar paired with the horse also make their appearance. One of these carried the earliest inscription CAN DVRO. Then followed a major change with the introduction of a pattern of backed crescents on the obverses. A number of inscriptions are found on these types – ANTED, ECEN, ED, EDN, ECE, AESV and SAENV – though what kind of issuing authority these names represent, whether king or mint official, it is impossible to say. The latest coin, issued for Prasutagus, client king of the Icenī after the Roman Conquest, emphasizes the problem with its Latin legend SUB RI PRASTO ESICO FECIT (under the authority of King Prasto, Esico made me).

Until recently there was comparatively little to be said of the archaeology of the Icenī but field surveys, rescue excavations and the impact of metal detectorists have together produced a considerable array of new data (Davies 1996; Davies and Williamson 1999) stressing the distinctive nature of Icenian culture. The two major points to emerge are the apparent increase in population in the Late Iron Age with a colonization of the heavier clay lands, and the appearance of regional groups within the territory.

The most dramatic aspect of Icenian culture lies in the wealth of the ruling élites and the way this was displayed in elaborate metalwork, large quantities of which have now been recovered. Most spectacular are the hoards of gold and electrum torcs and arm rings. The best known are those from Snettisham, Bawsey and North Creake, of which Snettisham provides the largest haul, but to date no fewer than eleven sites have produced precious metal torcs, all but two coming from well-drained soils towards the western border of the tribe (Sealey 1979; Davies 1996, figure 8). The strong probability is that these

depositions were made within ritual contexts, but only at Snettisham is it possible to begin to define something of the ritual nature of the larger site where the hoards were found.

The region is also well known for its Late Iron Age decorated bronze horse-gear. Santon Downham, Ringstead and Westhall have all produced large collections of horse-trappings, including bits, terret-rings, harness-mounts, linchpins and other chariot-fittings. But the work of metal detectorists is now bringing to light far more material of this kind, with more than seventy findspots already recorded and the number increasing yearly. There can be little doubt that elaborately bedecked horses pulling chariots were a common sight among the Iceni.

Defended sites are few and not very well dated, but the multivallate fort of Wareham Camp produced a small group of pottery dating to immediately before the Conquest. Other strongly defended sites include Holkham, South Creak, Narborough and Thetford Castle (Davies *et al.* 1991). Another identifiable settlement type is the rectangular enclosure, a type which seems to concentrate in north-west Norfolk (Davies 1996, 76–7). Little is known of them. One of the more elaborate is the multiple-ditched enclosure at Fison Way near Thetford (Figure 20.18). The site has been fully excavated and shown to have been in use for several centuries. Occupation began in the Middle Iron Age and continued into the early first century AD as a series of small conjoined enclosures. The multiple-ditched rectangular enclosure was built around the time of the Roman Conquest and subsequently enlarged around AD 50–60. Inside was a single large circular structure. Although it is possible that the site was the residence for a member of the élite, a more likely explanation is that it was a temple (see p. 565).

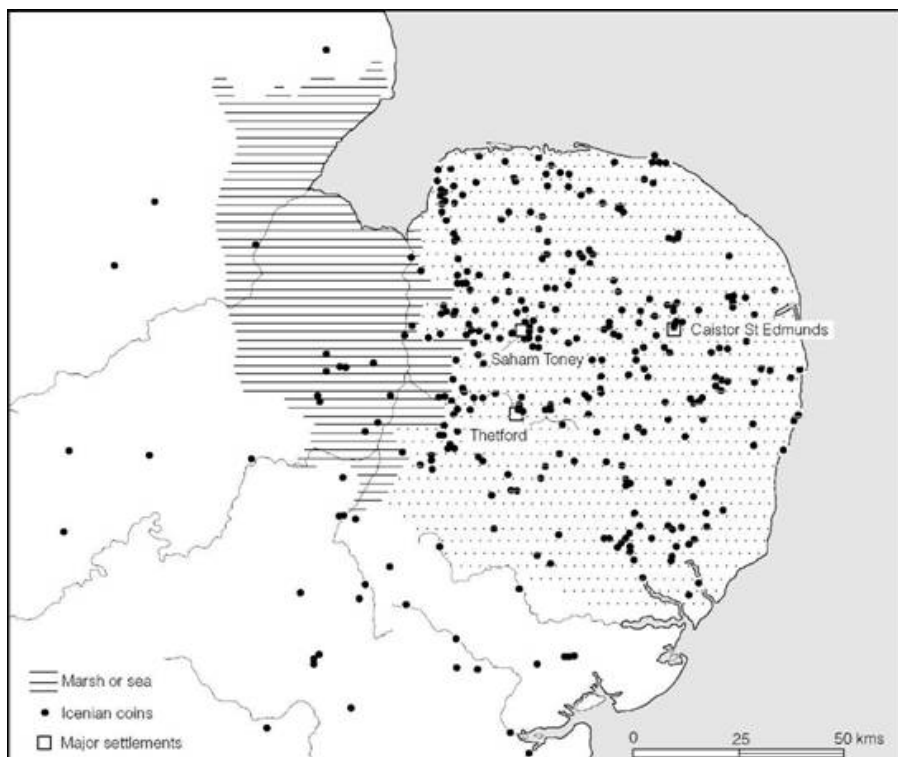


Figure 8.15 *The territory of the Iceni (sources: author and CCI 2003).*

While no sites that can definitely be regarded as oppida have yet been identified in Iceni territory several areas of extensive Late Iron Age occupation are known, at Caistor St Edmund, Thetford and Saham Toney, all commanding river crossings (Davies 1996, 78–81). Saham Toney has been extensively studied through fieldwork. The main focus at Woodcock Hill has produced a considerable collection of metalwork including four gold coins and sixty silver issues of the Iceni. The site lies at the junction of the Breckland and the boulder clay plateau of central East Anglia where a major north–south route crosses a tributary of the river Wissey. It is a location well suited for the development of an urban settlement, but without excavation the status of the site must remain in doubt.

The relationship of the Iceni to their southern neighbours, the Trinovantes/Catuvellauni, is largely unknown, though coins from both were exchanged in each other's region and wheel-turned pottery of Aylesford–Swarling type was accepted and adopted by the Iceni. That said, the archaeological evidence would suggest that the Iceni retained their distinctive identity throughout, and in the early years following the invasion remained self-governed by their king Prasutagus who

ruled as a client king under the authority of Rome. This was the tribe which, less than twenty years after the invasion, was to produce the energetic and almost successful war leader Queen Boudica.



Figure 8.16 Coins of the Iceni: 1 early horse/face silver unit; 2 Bury C silver unit; 3 boar/horse silver unit; 4 face/horse silver unit; 5 ECEN silver unit; 6 IAENV silver unit; twice actual size (photograph: Institute of Archaeology, Oxford).

Summary

The four coin-issuing tribes of the peripheral zone separated the southern core zone from the less developed areas of western and northern Britain and it was through their territories that raw materials and other commodities had to pass in the period of intensified trade

that characterized the Late Iron Age. Thus they formed a buffer zone between the developed and underdeveloped parts of the island. Their socio-economic systems must, therefore, have evolved to provide the enabling mechanisms necessary for the through flow of products. The emergence of a peripheral zone, along the Jurassic Ridge, is no accident since this broad geomorphological region, providing ease of communication along its length, effectively divides Britain into two parts, each with different resource potential, microclimate and degree of access to Continental trading networks. The communities occupying the ridge would thus become subjected to economic forces once cross-Channel trade intensified. This may have led to the emergence of large tribal entities by the coalescence of smaller ethnic groups and would, in any event, have necessitated the development of a coinage to facilitate exchange.

The different 'histories' of the four tribes reflect changes in the orientation and intensity of trade. The earliest trading axis favoured the Solent harbours and thereby the Durotriges, but by the time the Gallic War was over a new eastern axis had been created, leaving the Durotriges to become isolated and impoverished. The resources of west Britain could now be reached via the Upper Thames valley and across the northern part of Dobunnic territory, while those of the north called for a route across the Chilterns and through Bedfordshire, skirting the fen margin, to the southern part of the Corieltavian territory. These two routes were in all probability broad corridors along which exchange goods passed in both directions, making use of a complex system of social relationships. One might anticipate that such enhanced activity created conditions for exceptional change. Some evidence for this can be found in the archaeological record. In the Middle Thames region, for example, a bewildering variety of coins are found, making it difficult to decide in which tribal territory the region lay: such a mixture could have come about as the result of constant traffic between the eastern communities and the northern Dobunni. The northern 'corridor' through the Chilterns and across Bedfordshire is probably reflected in the dense scatter of élite burials belonging to those able to benefit from controlling the passage of goods. While it must be admitted that this picture is both incomplete and oversimplified it has some value in helping to focus on the complex processes at work at the time.

The late pre-Roman Iron Age in western and northern Britain

Beyond the peripheral zone of coin-issuing tribes – the Durotriges, Dobunni, Corieltauvi and Iceni – lay vast expanses of Britain: the south-western peninsula, Wales and the north. The south-west differed from the rest in that it remained in contact by sea both with the southeastern tribes and with Armorica and thus absorbed cultural influences from the two peninsulas. Wales and the north on the other hand were far removed from the rapidly expanding economies of the south-east and were largely isolated from Continental influences until the second half of the first century AD, by which time Roman rule, or the bow-wave effects of the Roman presence, had penetrated all but the extreme north-west. For these reasons there is a considerable degree of cultural unity over large stretches of country and it is sometimes difficult to isolate material of the Late Iron Age from that of earlier periods. Nevertheless the writings of several Roman authors provide a valuable descriptive horizon from which to assess the social and economic changes of the preceding decades.

The south-west peninsula: the Dumnonii (Figure 9.1)

The Dumnonii occupied the south-west peninsula probably as far east as the Parrett–Axe line. In this position of relative isolation, cultural contact with the communities of the south-east was limited and it is therefore hardly surprising that the disparate peoples who occupied the broken and varied landscape of the peninsula failed to develop a coinage of their own: exchange remained embedded in traditional social systems. Apart from coin hoards at Mount Batten, Carn Brae, Penzance and Paul, coins are virtually unknown.

The ceramic development of the region can be divided into two distinct traditions, one following the other and in parts replacing it. The earlier is characterized by the *South-Western Decorated Wares*, which used to be called ‘Glastonbury wares’. These decorated vessels were produced at several centres, including the Lizard peninsula and

on the Permian outcrops of the Exe region. As we have seen, the tradition probably originated in the fourth century BC, inspired by Armorican developments, and decorated wares continued to be made well into the first century BC. The classic forms were necked-bowls and jars decorated with elaborated curvilinear motifs executed by shallow tooling, stamping and, less frequently, the roulette wheel.



Figure 9.1 *The tribes of western Britain (sources: various).*

The second, later, tradition is generally known as *Cordoned Ware*. The repertoire includes necked-jars, tazza-like bowls and large everted-rimmed jars, all undecorated except for prominent horizontal cordons sometimes used in combination with grooves ([Figure A:37](#)). The vessels were well made and turned on a wheel. At several sites, including Castle Dore, Cordoned Ware could be shown to be generally later than South-Western Decorated Wares and there is ample evidence from Cornwall to show that the Cordoned Ware tradition continued into the Roman period.

It used to be thought that Cordoned Wares were brought to the south-west by refugees from Armorica fleeing in the wake of the Roman advance of 56 BC, and that fogous and cliff castles, both of which had close parallels to similar structures in Brittany, were introduced at the same time (Hawkes 1966). This view can no longer be sustained, since the Cornish fogous (Christie 1979; Maclean 1992) and cliff castles (Sharpe 1992; Herring 1994) can be shown to date back to the beginning of the Middle Iron Age if not earlier and are part of a shared cultural tradition which linked the two peninsulas for centuries before the Caesarian episode ([Figure 9.2](#)). The appearance of Cordoned Ware could be better explained in the general context of continuing social intercourse rather than as the result of a single event.

The dating of the Cornish Cordoned Wares is difficult to establish with precision, but stylistically they have little in common with Armorican ceramics of the Caesarian period. They do, however, share a general resemblance to developments in north-western France and central southern Britain dating to the second half of the first century BC. They are best explained therefore as the result of local trading contacts between these areas in the post-Caesarian period. That the distribution is restricted largely to Cornwall, extending as far east as the port of Mount Batten, suggests that most of Devon was excluded from the system: here the traditional decorated wares probably continued until the Roman Conquest.

Dumnonian settlement of the period c. 100 BC–AD 50 forms part of a continuous pattern well rooted in the preceding centuries and continuing in some areas throughout the Roman period (Johnson and Rose 1982). In Devon the multiple-ditched enclosures of the third or second century remain the dominant form of defended homestead or hamlet into the first century AD, with little apparent change in either size of community or the predominantly pastoral economy. Thus Milber Down Camp, one of the few excavated sites in this category, remained in use well into the first century BC, while later occupation into the Roman period continued outside the main enclosure. Similarly, at Castle Dore first-century AD occupation is attested by

Cordoned Ware. Further west, in Cornwall, many of the rounds (i.e. small defended homesteads seldom exceeding 2 ha in extent) which form a dominant element in the Roman settlement pattern originate in the Late Iron Age. At Crane Godrevy, Castle Gotha and Gwithian Cordoned Ware has been found; and at the somewhat larger site of Carloggas, St Mawgan-in-Pydar, occupation began during the late second or early first century BC, while South-Western Decorated Wares were in use and continued into the Roman period. Another large settlement, the bivallate site of Killibury, began equally early but was abandoned before Roman pottery reached the area. The settlement at Trevisker, close to Carloggas, spanned the period from the Middle Bronze Age into Roman times. It is estimated (Thomas 1966b, 88–90) that in Cornwall and south and west Devon between 750 and 1,000 rounds existed, with a density averaging one per 2.6 square kilometres. Clearly they must represent the homesteads or small hamlets of an essentially non-nucleated population.

Comparatively little is known of the occupation of central and eastern Devon in the Late Iron Age but excavation on Dartmoor, at Gold Park, on the eastern edge of the moor, has demonstrated the presence of a small well-established farming community. The discovery raises the possibility that some of the more congenial moorland landscape may have begun to be recolonized at this time.

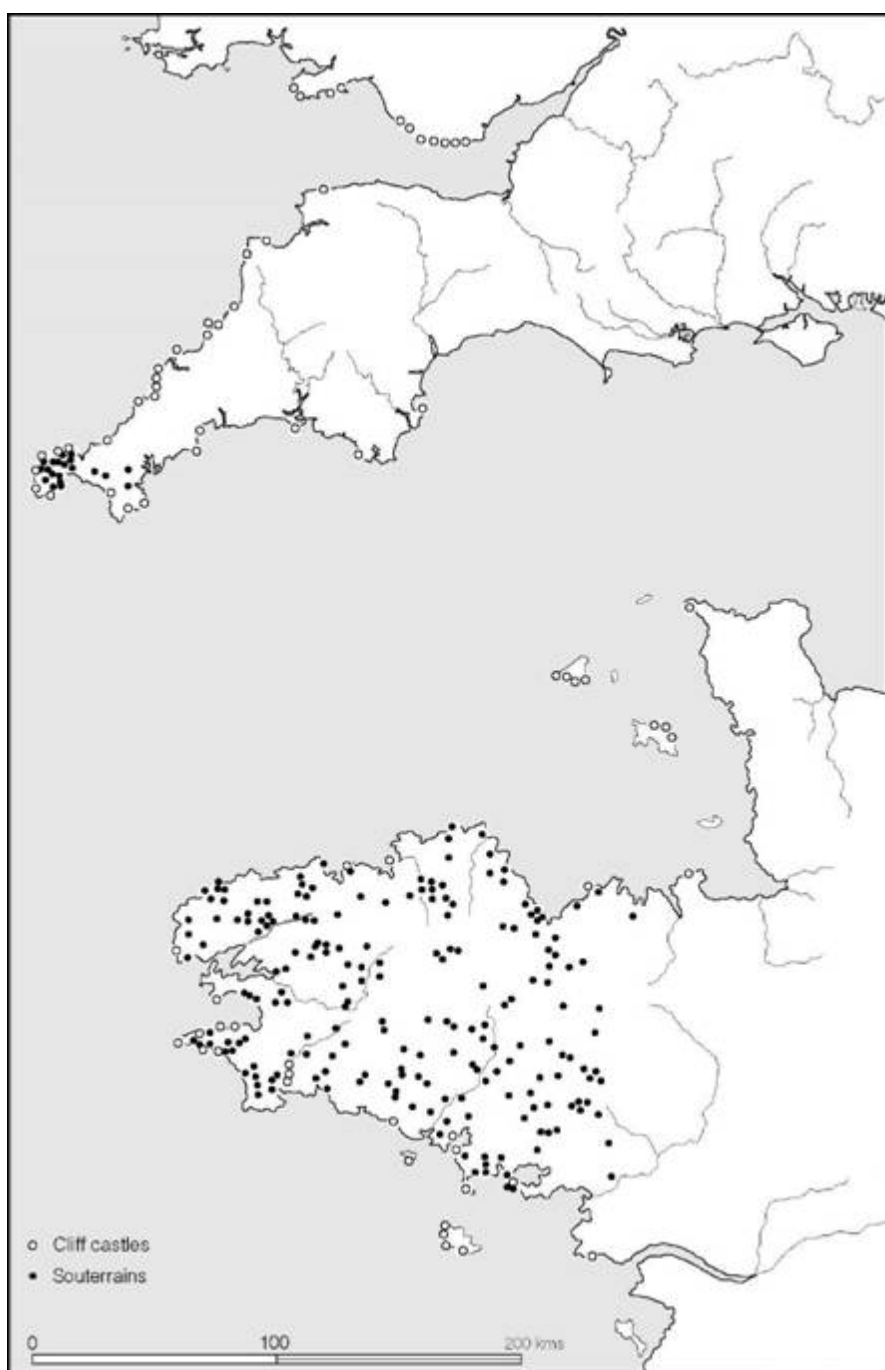


Figure 9.2 Settlement similarities between Cornwall and Brittany (source: Cunliffe 1982a with additions).

Another type of settlement which appears later, representing the

same size of social group, is the courtyard house – so-called because each had a central area, thought to have been a courtyard, surrounded by rooms all enclosed within a massive stone wall. It has, however, been suggested that the entire structure, rooms and central area, was roofed in one (Wood 2001). Sometimes courtyard houses were built within rounds (e.g. Goldherring) or were otherwise enclosed, but open villages like Chysauster and Carn Euny are also known. The origin of the courtyard house is still a matter of uncertainty, but the evidence from the long-lived settlement at Carn Euny suggests local evolution, though perhaps not until after the beginning of the Roman occupation.

The best-defined category of hillforts in the south-west are the cliff castles, which densely ring the coasts of Cornwall (Herring 1994) and north Devon. Essentially, a cliff castle is a promontory projecting into the sea, the neck of which is defended by one or more series of banks and ditches. The obvious similarities between the cliff castles of south-west Britain and those of Brittany (Wheeler and Richardson 1957) has frequently been used as an argument in favour of a Venetic invasion of Cornwall, but of the sites excavated, Maen Castle seems to have originated at least as early as the second century BC, while Gurnard's Head has produced a range of pottery beginning not very much later. At the Rumps occupation began in the second century BC and lasted until the early first century AD. Thus, from the available evidence it would appear that cliff castles formed an essential part of the settlement pattern for at least three centuries and are therefore unlikely to be the result of the arrival of refugees in the mid-first century BC.

The enclosed areas of the cliff castles vary according to the shape and size of the promontory selected, but since in every case the actual length of the defences was kept to a minimum, the amount of labour involved in construction was relatively slight. Massive hillfort-building on the scale practised in the south-east is almost unknown, and even when an inland site was chosen, like Tregear or Chun Castle, size was restricted. At Chun, for example, while the two defensive walls were substantial, the area enclosed was only about 52 m across.

The function of the cliff castles presents a problem. They were often remote and inaccessible and some offered little inhabitable space. It could, of course, be that they served as the residences of the élite but their liminal positions, at the interface of land and sea, might hint at a less secular function. It is not impossible that some served as a focus for ritual activity (Sharpe 1992). At any event the cliff castles and small inland forts were not suited to serve as foci for larger social gatherings as were the hillforts of Wessex.

The port-of-trade established at Mount Batten, Plymouth, in the Late

Bronze Age, and serving throughout much of the Iron Age as a link with the Atlantic trading system, remained in use during the Late Iron Age, but the intensity of occupation does not appear to have been great though there is evidence of contact with the Solent harbours at this time. The cemetery on Stamford Hill nearby did, however, produce a group of well-furnished burials dating to the middle decade of the first century AD, suggesting the possibility of an upturn in fortunes at about the time of the Roman Conquest.

The rite of inhumation in small cists, which was practised in the area in the preceding periods (e.g. at Harlyn Bay and Trevone), continued unhindered into the Roman period. It is represented at several sites, including the large cemetery at Stamford Hill, Mount Batten, and the smaller group of burials at Trelan Bahow near St Keverne, where one of the graves was of a rich female who had been provided with a bronze mirror, two bracelets, rings, brooches and a necklace of blue glass beads, all dating to the first century AD. The similarities between this burial and female inhumations in the territory of the Durotriges and Dobunni may suggest an element of unity underlying the burial rites of the south-west. At Bryher, Isles of Scilly, a burial provided with a mirror and a sword was found, implying that the burial tradition may have been more complex than the gender-related items may at first have suggested.

In summary, it may be said that many of the elements which together constitute the culture of the Dumnonii owe much to social intercourse with their Armorican neighbours, but Dumnonian culture developed slowly in parallel with the Continent and was not suddenly altered by incursions of refugees.

The proximity of the two peninsulas facilitated social interaction but it was probably the tin trade, stretching back into the Bronze Age, which acted as the main stimulus for contact. This network of exchange brought the communities of Armorica and the south-west together, while the striking geomorphological similarities of the two territories led to a degree of parallel cultural development. The ceramic sequences, though distinct, shared much in common. At the same time settlement morphology, with its cliff castles, rounds and fogous or souterrains, was remarkably similar on both sides of the Channel. The development of a trading network between Armorica and the Solent harbours in the first half of the first century BC may have temporarily deflected contact, but in the aftermath of the Caesarian campaign traditional relations were re-established. It was probably in this context that the Cornish Cordoned Wares developed and a few Italian amphorae reached sites like Carloggas and the Rumps. The contrast between the culture and economy of the Dumnonii and that of the other tribes of southern Britain is very

marked. The Dumnonii were in every way closer to the tribes of Armorica than they were to their neighbours in Britain.

Wales

Any consideration of the cultural groupings and developments in Wales during the first centuries BC and AD is likely to be fraught with difficulty, largely because of the lack of large-scale excavation and the almost total absence of closely datable cultural material. Moreover, the inhospitable nature of much of the countryside has ensured that considerable areas remained uninhabited while in others pastoralism probably played a significant part. Together these factors militate against an adequate description of the material culture on a regional basis.

Knowledge of tribal groupings rests largely upon the writings of the geographer Ptolemy whose lists, taken together with descriptive accounts by Tacitus and other fragments of epigraphic evidence, show that Wales was divided into a minimum of five tribal areas roughly approximating to broad geographical divisions. In the extreme south-west were the Demetae. Next to them, from the Gower peninsula stretching along the coastal plain to the Wye and extending into the Black Mountains, were the Silures, whom Tacitus describes as ruddy-faced and curly-haired, reminding him of Iberians. In the north-west, centred on the Llyn peninsula, lay the Gangani, who may have been related to a tribe of the same name living in north-west Ireland, while along the north coast lived the Deceangli. Lastly, between these four tribes were the Ordovices, occupying the mountainous area in the centre of the principality.

The Silures

The exact limits of Silurian territory cannot be precisely drawn but it is clear that the bulk of the tribe occupied the lowland coastal areas of Glamorganshire and Monmouthshire and the valleys of the Black Mountains, with the river Wye forming the approximate boundary with the Dobunni. In all probability, the cluster of small defended settlements centred on the upper reaches of the Usk, in the heart of the Brecon Beacons, can also be regarded as belonging to a geographically isolated community of the Silures.

Material culture and settlement type have many similarities with those of adjacent territories. Some of the hillforts in the eastern part of the territory, such as Sudbrook and Llanmelin in Monmouthshire, are closely similar to Wessex sites; others are best paralleled by the multiple-ditched enclosures of the south-west peninsula; while the cliff castles of the coastal group have much in common with those of

Cornwall and Devon. Environment, economy and commercial communications must have encouraged this parallelism. At Llanmelin a 2.2 ha multivallate enclosure with a semi-inturned entrance was shown to have been in use during the local phase of the saucepan pot continuum, roughly second to first centuries BC, and there is some evidence of modification after south-eastern style pottery had arrived on the site, probably during the first century AD. Occupation continued into the Roman period. A similar continuity into Roman times was demonstrated by the multivallate enclosure at Sudbrook, where the defences came late in the sequence, post-dating occupation containing first-century BC saucepan pots. The levels contemporary with the defences contained a mixture of first-century AD pottery continuing until early Flavian times.

Both of the sites so far considered lie at the east side of the territory, where influence from Dobunnii and Roman culture might be expected. Further west, however, along the Glamorganshire coast, the material culture is far less well represented. The forts which have been excavated, the Knave, the Bulwarks, the West Fort on Harding's Down, Bishopston Valley Fort and High Penard, have produced very little apart from a few imported sherds of South-Western Decorated Ware, odd scraps of Roman pottery and a few indeterminate sherds. Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that the forts were in use during the last century of Silurian independence.

Only two settlements have been excavated on any scale. At Mynydd Bychan, a walled enclosure was examined containing a group of circular huts. In the first period the buildings were of timber but later they were rebuilt in stone within walled courtyards. Occupation began in the latter part of the first century BC and continued probably as late as Flavian times, the later decades being characterized by the appearance of wheel-turned vessels manufactured in the south-eastern manner but in an orange-buff fabric.

The farmstead at Whitton presented a rather different sequence. Here a rectangular ditched enclosure was built c. AD 30 to defend a series of circular timber-built houses. Occupation continued until the end of the century, when rectangular timber buildings replaced them. These in turn were succeeded by simple masonry-based buildings in the second century. The evidence suggests a largely unbroken sequence spanning the period of transition from freedom to incorporation with little trace of a change in status.

From the inception of the Fosse frontier in AD 47, Silurian territory would have been in close contact with the Roman world, and the foundation of the fortress at Usk in c. 55–60, followed by several decades of campaigning before the final annexation in c. AD 74, would soon have brought the natives of the coastal plain into an

intimate relationship with the Roman army. It may well have been under these conditions that the south-eastern style ceramics were introduced from Dobunnic territory (Spencer 1983).

The Demetae

The Demetae occupied the extreme south-west corner of Wales, probably extending along the valleys of the Tywi and Teifi into the foothills of the Cambrian mountains. Much of the more hospitable parts of this territory was densely scattered with small enclosed settlements, usually 0.4–1.2 ha in extent, comparable in many ways to the rounds of Cornwall ([Figure 9.3](#)). Excavations at Walesland Rath, Pems., have demonstrated the existence of a moderate-sized community living in a cluster of circular huts from the first century BC into the first century AD. In the second century, after a period of abandonment, the site was reoccupied by a community existing in much the same way as before, but now living in a simple rectangular stone building and using Romanized pottery. Continuity of this kind may also be suspected at two nearby sites, Cwmbrwyn and Trellissey, where Romanized buildings have been excavated inside apparently earlier earthworks. Not all of the native sites which continued in use into the Roman period and beyond showed evidence of Romanized improvements, as a series of comprehensive excavations in the Llawhaden region have amply demonstrated (Williams 1988). This pattern of unhampered indigenous development spanning many centuries may well have been even more deeply rooted. Indeed, the discovery of La Tène I bracelets at Coygan Camp tends to emphasize the antiquity of settlement in the area, but the extreme paucity of artefacts makes any assessment of material development and chronology a matter of difficulty for the pre-Roman phases.

The coast line of the extreme south-west supports a considerable number of cliff castles closely similar to those of Devon and Cornwall and Armorica. Around the coasts of Pembrokeshire alone fifty-five have been identified (Crane 2001, figure 1) but few have been examined by excavation. Work at Great Castle Head, Dale, Pems., however, shows the promontory to have been defended over a period of time extending into the Late Iron Age.

Several observers have pointed out the relative lack of Roman military activity in the southwest of Wales, suggesting that the Demetae offered no resistance to the advance and therefore required no substantial holding force save a garrison based at Carmarthen. If this were so, it would explain the peaceful uninterrupted occupation of the peasant villages and hamlets – a process which, on present evidence, offers some contrasts to the settlement of the hostile Silurian territory.

The Ordovices, Gangani and Deceangli

The settlement pattern of north Wales appears to have been little affected by the events of the late pre-Roman Iron Age in the south-east of the country. The material culture remained as sparse as ever and many of the sites continued to be occupied well into the Roman period with little evidence of significant change. The Roman campaigns of AD 47–51 and indeed the Roman presence in Britain from AD 43 tend, however, to be reflected in the structural development of some of the defended sites. At Dinorben, Denbigh., it has been suggested that the final reconstruction of the ramparts on the south side of the fort (period V) could have resulted from Roman threats in the neighbourhood, while at Castell Odo, Caerns., the slighting of the defences may have been carried out by the Romans in the last quarter of the first century AD.

Perhaps the most impressive feature of the settlement pattern of the area is the continued use of the hillforts like Tre'r Ceiri, Caerns., with their densely occupied interiors, and the development of large numbers of enclosed farmsteads usually working on average 6 ha or so of associated terraced fields (Smith 1978b; Smith 2001). While the exact origin of this system is still in some doubt (Hogg 1966), it is clear that the social grouping and some aspects of the architecture must relate to pre-Roman tradition and it would indeed be surprising if many of the farms in use in the Roman period did not originate in the first century BC or even earlier.

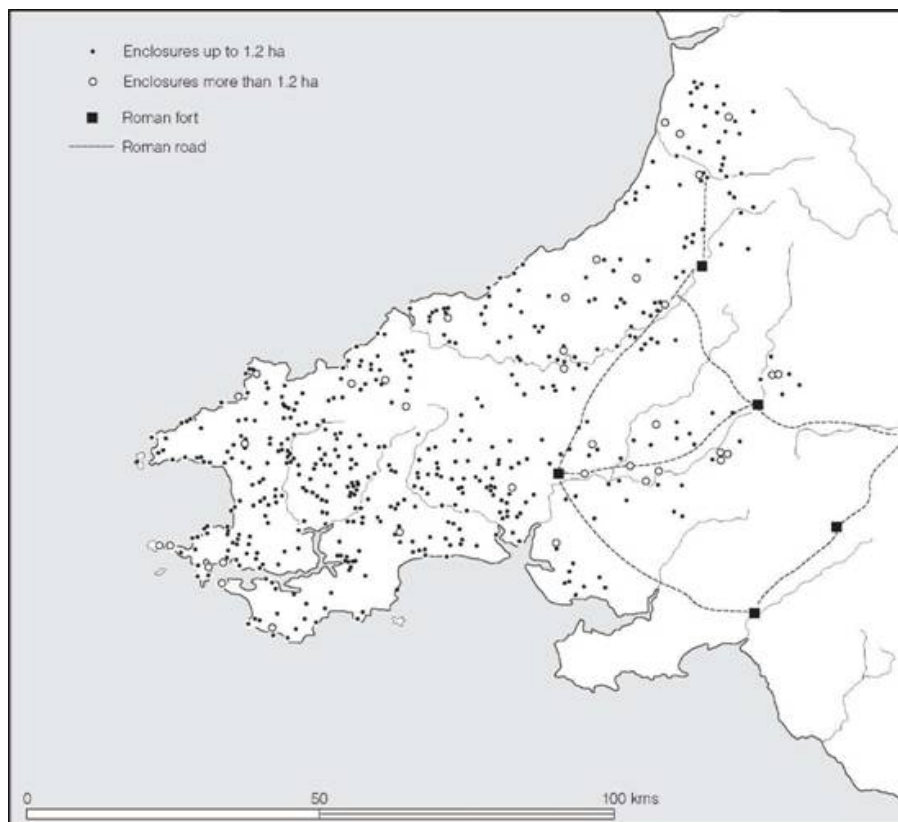


Figure 9.3 *Settlements in south-west Wales (source: G. Williams 1988 with additions).*

Few settlements have yet been excavated on anything approximating to a useful scale. One exception is Bryn Eryr on Anglesey, which was occupied apparently continuously from the Middle Iron Age to the end of the Roman period, the late Roman phase being represented by a rectangular enclosure containing a pair of houses set within a farmyard. Two settlements at Crawcwellt West and Bryn y Castell, in Merioneth, were both engaged in iron production, as well, presumably, as farming, in the Late Iron Age, providing an interesting insight into the specialized economies of these remote upland settlements.

The Cornovii

According to Ptolemy, the territory of the Cornovii included both the cantonal capital at Viroconium and the legionary base at Deva (Chester), which in terms of modern counties would have meant that the tribe occupied Cheshire and Shropshire and probably parts of

surrounding areas. To the south, their boundary with the Dobunni probably approximated with the river Teme, an east-flowing tributary of the Severn; in the east they would have met the Corieltauvi in the Trent valley; and to the north the boundary with the Brigantes may have lain along the Mersey. The western limit of the tribal territory is far more difficult to define. The great number of defended enclosures in the hills and mountains of the Welsh borderland could equally well have been under Ordovician domination, but the structural peculiarities of some of the larger forts (e.g. Old Oswestry, the Breiddin, Ffridd Faldwyn and Titterstone Clee) tend to link them more with the forts of the south and east, suggesting a zone of contact, although this does not necessarily imply that the borderland forts belonged to Cornovian territory. The absence of coins and the relative lack of finds make the definition of the tribal boundary hereabouts uncertain and indeed the very identity of the Cornovii is difficult to define in terms of distinctive material culture (Wigley 2001; Philpott 2001).

In the century or so before the Roman Conquest, the area seems to have continued to develop along earlier lines uninfluenced by the social and economic systems of the south-east. Many of the hillforts were kept in defensive order, and a little pottery and fine metalwork was imported from outside the area but, like the other territories outside the aggressive range of the southeastern chieftains and of their trading patterns, there was little discernible change until the entire territory was annexed by the Roman army led by Ostorius Scapula, in and soon after AD 48.

Northern England (*Figure 9.4*)

The Greek geographer Ptolemy writing in the second century AD tells us of a northern tribe, the Brigantes, whose territory stretched from 'sea to sea' (*Geog.* ii, 3, 10). This vision of a northern people, 'the most populous in the whole province', was also conjured up by Tacitus writing of the Conquest of Britain (*Agricola*, xvii, 2). From these descriptions has sprung the modern construct of *Brigantia*, conceived of as a vast territory extending from the Peak District to Hadrian's Wall and from the Irish Sea to the North Sea, a political and cultural monolith. The vision is given enhanced respectability by the story of the Brigantian queen, Cartimandua, and her husband Venutius, who make an appearance in the works of Tacitus. Much has been written on the subject, especially by Sir Mortimer Wheeler in his report on the excavations at Stanwick (Wheeler 1954), and for some while Wheeler's interpretation of the Brigantes and their history was widely accepted; but new work at Stanwick and several reviews of the

northern evidence (Braund 1984; Haselgrove 1984a; Higham 1987) have refocused attention on the varied and complex nature of the evidence and have amply demonstrated that many old preconceptions must now be abandoned.

The Brigantes were not the only tribe to be recorded in northern England. The Parisi were noted by Ptolemy and may be equated with the archaeologically defined Arras culture occupying the Yorkshire Wolds north of the Humber. Several other tribes mentioned by Ptolemy in the west and north of the territory can also be approximately located, though their cultural attributes are less well known.



Figure 9.4 *The tribes of northern England (sources: various).*

While there can be little doubt that the dominant force at the time of the Roman invasion was the Brigantes, the other tribal groups should not be overlooked, nor should the whole north be written off as a monolithic ‘Brigantian confederacy’. A far more likely model would be to see the Brigantes (whose name means ‘high ones’) as having hegemony over their neighbours, whose position was that of clients. The Brigantes themselves probably occupied the Pennines and their flanks, thus commanding not only a central position controlling

the principal routes north to south and east to west but also having access to a range of varied and well-drained and fertile soils (Higham 1987). In their geographical position probably lay the basis of their power.

The Brigantes and their neighbours

Relatively little is known of the settlement pattern and economy of the north at this time, but the varied geology and altitude, and the considerable differences in rainfall on either side of the Pennine ridge, have created various different micro-environments demanding different economic strategies. The traditional generalization – that the Brigantes were largely pastoralists (Wheeler 1954; Piggott 1958) – must now be abandoned in the face of growing evidence of agriculture in the north-east both from the results of pollen analysis (Turner 1979, 1981) and from actual crop remains recovered from sites such as Coxhae, Co. Durham, Thorpe Thewles, Cleveland, and Stanwick and Rock Castle, North Yorks. (Van der Veen 1992). The large numbers of beehive querns found in north-eastern Yorkshire, artefacts which are closely associated with good arable land, is a further indication of widespread agricultural activity, though the type is not exclusively of Late Iron Age date (Hayes, Hemingway and Spratt 1980; Gwilt and Heslop 1995). Animals, however, played a significant part in the economy, cattle being the most numerous. Clearly a mixed economy must have been practised over much of north-eastern Britain at this time, though the specific regimes will have varied from area to area (Haselgrove 1984a).

In the Pennine valleys early field systems, such as the well-preserved groups in Wharfedale and adjacent valleys, are a further indication of agricultural activity, but flocks and herds may well have been tended in upland pastures for much of the year. The use, well into the Roman era, of caves and isolated huts on the Pennine moors is an indication that a transhumant economy continued to be practised for many centuries. There is little evidence yet available for settlement and economy in the north-west at this time, but high rainfall would have made the arable strategies of the drier north-east less appropriate and there may well have been a greater reliance on animal husbandry.

Apart from dimly conceived differences between economic systems there is little evidence on which to distinguish regional or tribal variation. Ceramic technology was ill-developed (Evans 1995). Northern pottery consists almost entirely of coarsely made cooking and storage vessels, generally without decoration and of simple form lacking distinctive characteristics. No doubt most of the containers were made of wood, basketry, horn and leather – materials more appropriate to the needs of a society practising a degree of mobility.

An example of an elegant wooden dish was found in a waterlogged deposit at Stanwick. That the population was not entirely unappreciative of fine pottery is, however, vividly demonstrated by the high percentage of imported wares found at Stanwick: of all the pottery recovered, some 60 per cent consisted of samian ware, butt-beakers and other Roman imports from the south.

With the exception of Stanwick there is little evidence of centralized settlement in the north. Of those hillforts which have been excavated, Almondbury, Yorks., Mam Tor, Derbyshire, Cast-ercliff, Lincs., and Skelmore Head, Lancs., none appears to have been occupied after the fourth century BC and the normal unit of settlement remained the isolated farm of family or extended family size. Against this background the earthworks of Stanwick stand out in stark contrast.

Stanwick lies at the junction of two major routes, one running along the east side of the Pennines joining the south to Scotland and the other branching west across the mountains through the Stainmore Pass. The site now consists of over 300 ha of pasture and arable land enclosed and traversed by 10 km of massive earthworks surviving in places to a height of 5 m ([Figure 9.5](#)). The choice of location and the vast investment of energy in its fortification fairly reflect the great economic and political importance of the place, sited as it is in the heart of Brig-antian territory.

The potential interest of the site was fully appreciated by Sir Mortimer Wheeler, who chose it as a research project in 1951 and 1952. Wheeler's excavations were limited but his conclusions were far-reaching (Wheeler 1954). He saw Stanwick as a military stronghold of the Brigantes – a rallying place for anti-Roman resistance, beginning with a 7 ha enclosure, the Tofts, constructed in c. AD 47–8, which was then enlarged in two stages. In its final form Stanwick provided protection for the tribe in its last stand against the Ninth Legion led by Petillius Cerialis in a victorious sweep through the north in 71–2.

A more recent programme of fieldwork and excavation has shown that the structural sequence proposed by Wheeler has to be modified and that his military interpretation of the earthworks is likely to be incorrect (Chadburn 1983; Turnbull 1984; Haselgrove *et al.* 1991). It now seems quite possible that most of the system was laid out as part of a single plan, probably in the middle of the first century AD, although by that time part of the site, the Tofts, was already inhabited. The straggling earthworks and vast enclosed area are highly reminiscent of the territorial oppida of the south. This, together with the surprisingly high proportion of luxury pottery imported from the south suggests that Stanwick may have served, in much the same way as the southern oppida, as a centre of tribal power where long-

distance trade was articulated with local distribution networks. The evidence for metalworking (Spratling 1981) is entirely consistent with this view for at such centres raw materials would be given added value through refinement and manufacture.

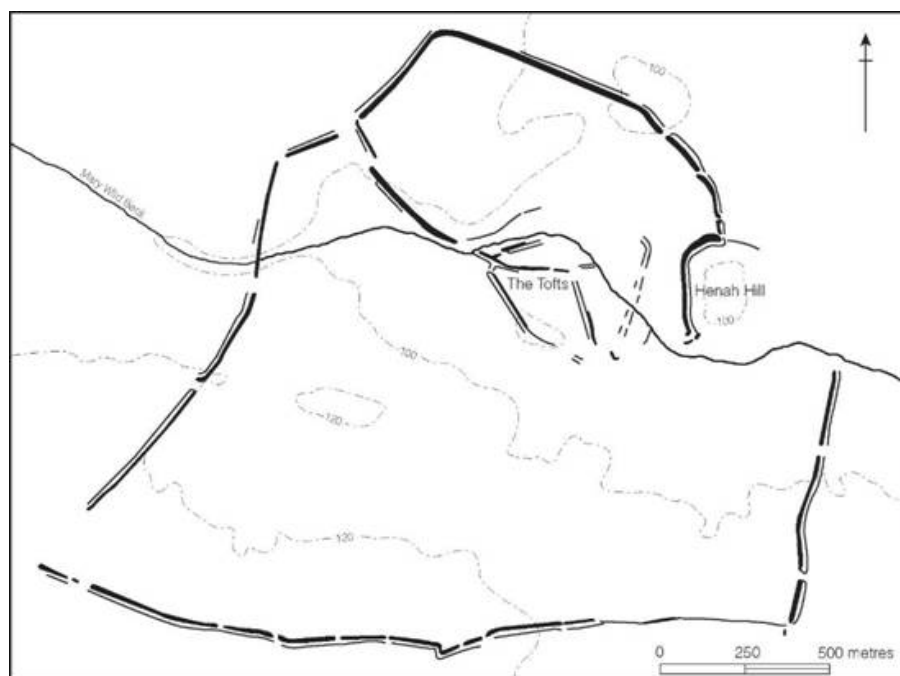


Figure 9.5 *The Stanwick fortifications (source: Haselgrove, Turnbull and Fitts 1991).*

The dating evidence suggests that occupation began at about the time of the Conquest and declined in the later decades of the first century AD. This is entirely explicable against the background of the early military history of the province ([chapter 10](#)). The initial intention was to secure only the south-east, and to this end a frontier zone was established from Lincoln to Exeter. Though further campaigning, followed by expansion, took place in the Midlands and Wales, the north was left as a friendly buffer state ruled by Queen Cartimandua until the early 70s. In such a context the development of vigorous trading relationships between the province and its northern neighbours would be expected. Stanwick, deep in Brigantian territory and commanding the major routes, was admirably sited to serve as the principal entrepôt where the Brigantian monopoly, established through treaty with the Roman authorities, could be exercised, further strengthening their hegemony over their lesser neighbours.

The situation in the north was politically unstable. Literary evidence

relating to the first century AD provides several glimpses of the factions and rivalries within upper echelons of society, and it may fairly be supposed that these reflect the deep divisions that might be expected within the structure of a people divided by tribal loyalties and whose territory and resources were so diverse. The flamboyant and aggressive aspects of this northern society are manifest in a group of distinctive swords (Piggott's class IV) made, no doubt, by a single school of craftsmen for the northern élite, and, by the scattered discoveries of horse-trappings including the remarkable hoard found at Stanwick in 1845 (MacGregor 1962; Fitts *et al.* 1999) which contained a sword, a wide range of chariot- and horse-trappings and a number of fragments of personal equipment. While the exact nature of the Stanwick hoard must remain in doubt, it provides a vivid impression of the degree of wealth and display attained by the upper classes of Brigantian society at the end of their period of freedom.

The Parisi

On the east flank of the Brigantes lay the Parisi, occupying the territory stretching from the Humber estuary to the north Yorkshire moors. The region was in close contact with northern France in the late fifth century, giving rise to the Arras culture (pp. 84–6 and Stead 1979), which developed possibly after a small-scale folk movement brought a new élite into the area from the Seine valley. Stead has demonstrated a degree of continuity from the fifth- or fourth-century beginning until the Roman Conquest, unhindered by any further Continental contact – a fact which has led him to support the idea that the tribal name of Parisi, recorded by Ptolemy in describing the situation in the first century AD, must date back to the fifth to fourth centuries. He further points out that the closest parallels for the Yorkshire burials occur in the territory of the Gallic Parisii.

The cemeteries of the Arras culture at Dane's Graves and Eastburn continued in use throughout the first century BC and well into the first century AD. There was little change, except that metal associations were rare in the later periods and, where objects occurred at all, they related more directly to the developing styles of southern Britain. Pottery buried with the dead, however, became more common. At Wetwang Slack the only discernible difference in a long-established cemetery, laid out along a track, was that in the Late Iron Age a ditch had been dug through many of the old burials to delimit a more restricted cemetery zone. By the Late Iron Age, however, the rite of vehicle burial had been totally abandoned throughout the region of the Arras culture.

One new element to appear in the area during the first century BC was the rite of single warrior inhumation – known from North

Grimston, Bugthorpe and Grimthorpe, all sited along the western side of the Wolds. The presence of weapons and lack of indigenous features – such as the cart buried with the body, rectangular enclosures and barrows – suggest a different tradition and ritual. It is, however, quite unnecessary to define a separate culture (as Stead 1965, 84, who calls it the North Grimston culture). It is simpler to regard the burials, which are similar to others found in various parts of Britain, as representing a general and widespread change. What exactly the new styles of burial mean is less clear; in all probability, it is little more than a change of fashion, but the possibility that it signifies the presence of extra-tribal mercenary warriors or simply a more warlike tendency in society should not be overlooked. In this connection, the discovery at Garton Slack of small chalk-cut figures carrying swords might be taken as evidence of a new militarism (Stead 1988, 32–4). Another change noted at about this period was the preference for laying out the body extended rather than crouched which was noted at the Rudston, Makeshift, cemetery (Stead 1991).

Settlement morphology and economy among the Parisi is becoming much better understood as the result of the large-scale excavation of extensive, but scattered settlements in the valley of Garton and Wetwang Slack (Dent 1982, 1990), where there is some evidence to suggest that, by the Late Iron Age, hitherto open settlements were being enclosed. Elsewhere, for example at Rillington, near Malton, complex patterns of enclosure had already been established a century or two earlier. Continuity of occupation into the Roman period is demonstrated at the ditched enclosures at Langton and Staxton: at Langton, and again at Rudston, Late Iron Age settlements were eventually replaced by Roman villas. The overall impression given by the settlement evidence is of continuity and gradual change.

The quality of ceramic production improved throughout the first centuries BC and AD, probably under the influence of traditions emanating from the territory of the Corieltavi across the Humber. Such an improvement would be consistent with the gradual introduction of a more settled economy. The development can perhaps best be seen by comparing the coarse plain vessels from Dane's Graves with the later collection from an occupation site at Emmotland in Holderness (Brewster 1963). The Emmotland vessels not only are better made and finished but are constructed in more positive forms, mostly jars with everted rims but occasionally bead-rimmed jars and small bowls reminiscent of the styles from the south. A scatter of Claudio-Neronian brooches from Parisian territory, together with the large quantity of imported Gallo-Belgic wares from North Ferriby on the north bank of the Humber, leaves little doubt that trading relations had been established with the south by the Claudian period,

if not earlier. North Ferriby may well have been the principal 'gateway community' through which products from the Roman province south of the Humber were introduced into the territory of the Parisi (Dent 1990). A settlement, producing a similar range of material, lay on the opposite bank at South Ferriby and must have been part of the transshipment system. It is possible that this was the way by which commodities entered barbarian territory *en route* to Stanwick, though some must have been deflected into the hands of the Parisian élite. An awareness of the material advantages of Romanization may have been instrumental in encouraging the tribe to offer no resistance to the eventual penetration by the Roman army in 71–2.

Southern Scotland: Votadini, Novantae, Selgovae and Damnonii (Figure 9.6)

Between the Tyne–Solway and the Clyde–Forth lines, which later approximated to the frontiers constructed under Hadrian and Antoninus Pius, four major tribal groups can be distinguished. The Votadini occupied the eastern coastal region and the lowlands between the Tyne and the Clyde, the Novantae covered the area of Galloway and Dumfriesshire, while the Selgovae lay between the two. North of the Novantae and stretching along the west coast to the Clyde was the territory of the Damnonii. How significant were the social and political differences between the groups at the time when they were distinguished by Roman writers in the first and second centuries AD it is impossible to say, except that the Votadini appear to have been more generously treated by the Romans than their neighbours the Selgovae, an observation which, if substantiated, might hint at a distinction between tribal policies. Nor is it possible to define how far back in time tribal distinctions can be traced, since there is no historical or numismatic evidence upon which to base conclusions. Any description of the area must, therefore, rely substantially on the form and distribution of settlement sites and upon the somewhat sparse material culture recovered by excavation.



Figure 9.6 *The major tribes of northern Britain (sources: various).*

While a very large number of settlement sites are known in the area, as a result of extensive field surveys carried out by the staff of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments and by G. Jobey, it is extremely difficult to assign dates to them, except for the earlier sites (p. 60) for which a number of radiocarbon determinations are available. On typological grounds, however, two major classes of settlements and homesteads can be defined as belonging to the period stretching from the end of the pre-Roman Iron Age into the Roman era: ‘scooped enclosures’, consisting of walled enclosures containing

huts and yards terraced into the natural slope of the hill, and settlements of stone-built huts. The latter are relatively common, particularly in the territory of the Votadini, but any apparent differential distribution may be due largely to different intensities in the archaeological fieldwork. The dating evidence obtained for some of these settlements suggests an initial occupation in the second century AD, but this does not preclude an earlier beginning for others. The abandonment of many of the small hillforts and defended enclosures probably occurred throughout the first century AD, but no indisputable dating evidence survives and it may well be that some at least continued in use. By the end of their life, many of them had developed into multivallate structures, some with close-set defences, others with their ramparts more widely spaced in a manner similar to that of the multiple-ditched enclosures of south-west Britain.

Many of the larger hillforts evidently continued to be occupied. The principal fort of the Votadini, the long-established Traprain Law in East Lothian, may have remained the tribal centre throughout the Roman occupation but there is little indisputable evidence for this. The Selgovian centre on Eildon Hill North, Roxburgh, seems to have been abandoned before, perhaps long before, the time of the Flavian advance. A general consideration of the forts of both the Selgovae and the Votadini tends to suggest a gradual amalgamation of nucleated communities at an increasingly restricted number of sites in a manner paralleled in southern Britain. This might well represent a growing political cohesion which eventually manifested itself in organized tribal attitudes to Rome. Herein might lie the reason why Agricola subdued the eastern areas of Scotland first, before turning his attention to the more fragmented Novantae and Damnonii, where there are only four hillforts in excess of 2.5 ha compared with thirteen in the territory of the Selgovae and Votadini.

A few brochs are known in Votadinian territory, with rather more spreading down the west coast into the lands of the Damnonii and Novantae. One can be shown to be secondary to the multivallate hillfort at Torwoodlee, Selkirk, while at Edin's Hall, Berwick, a broch follows a hillfort but is replaced by a stone-built settlement. Dates ranging from the first into the second century AD are indicated for the occupation of the southern brochs where there is sufficient material to indicate a chronology. Various suggestions have been made to explain the occurrence of brochs in the area, including the importation of broch-building mercenaries by the Votadini, following the first Roman withdrawal from Scotland, but the matter must remain beyond proof.

Northern Scotland (Figure 9.6)

North of the Forth–Clyde line the names of some twelve tribes are recorded, but since they are not easy to differentiate historically or archaeologically it is simpler to describe the area and its settlements in general terms.

The Highland Massif, the homeland of the Caledonians, divides the area into two: the eastern coastal region occupied by the Venicones, the Vacomagi and the Taezali; and the north and west coasts and islands (the Atlantic province) settled by the Epidii, Creones, Carnonacae, Caereni, Cornovii, Smertae, Lugi and Decantae. In the north-eastern region the basic folk culture continued largely unchanged. Defended settlement sites, duns, hillforts and occasional brochs occur but are relatively little known in archaeological terms. It was through this area that the last campaigns of Agricola were fought, and it was somewhere here that the great army of the Caledonians under their leader Calgacus met its defeat, leaving the countryside depleted for a generation or two. Events of this magnitude must have left their mark on the settlement pattern but it still remains to be defined.

The Atlantic province, largely untouched by Rome, continued to develop in relative isolation, giving rise to a range of highly distinctive structures and a material culture well adapted to the needs of the environment. Reassessing the evidence in 1934, Childe referred to the structures of the area as the *castle complex*, in order to emphasize the basic unity of the hundreds of small forts, duns and brochs which characterized the densely fortified landscape. Broadly speaking, these ‘castles’ can be divided into duns and brochs, both of which can be further subdivided on the basis of their form, siting and regional distribution (MacKie 1965c, figure 2). The details of these structures are considered below ([chapter 14](#)) and need not concern us now.

The material culture belonging to the settlements of the Atlantic province presents much the same variety as that of the contemporary sites in the south, with the one exception that iron was never plentiful. Bone was made into needles, awls, gouges, bobbins, long-handled combs, spindle whorls and dice; bronze was used for ring-headed pins and spiral finger-rings; while stone of various kinds continued in use for tool-making, for the production of armlets out of jet and for the manufacture of small vessels. Another similarity to southern Britain is that pottery was well made and relatively plentiful in the Western Isles; moreover, it is susceptible to regional and chronological division. In the west several distinct styles have been defined; these include *Cletraval ware*, characterized by globular jars with everted rims, decorated by a finger-pinched girth cordon with concentric channelled semi-circles in a zone above ([Figure A:40](#)). Alongside the

later stages of the development, *Vaul ware* appears in two basic forms: large barrel-shaped urns and smaller jars with an S-shaped profile and slightly everted rim; both types are often decorated with incised geometric patterns. Broadly contemporary with the Vaul wares are the barrel-shaped *Balevullin* vessels with finger-printed girth cordons, sometimes ornamented with simple incised patterns. Such dating evidence as there is suggests that these decorated wares belong to the second century AD.

In the northern area of Orkney, Shetland, Caithness and Sutherland incised and cordoned wares are almost entirely lacking. Instead, the commonest types are tall jars with small beaded or everted rims, sometimes with well-burnished surfaces, which developed out of the pre-broch wares at Clickhimin and can therefore be referred to as the *Clickhimin IV* style. The type is widespread in the north and occasionally penetrates into the west. The main feature is the shouldered jar with internally fluted everted rim (Figures A:38 and A:39). Sometimes cordons are applied at the junction of rim and body and a few examples have bases internally impressed with patterns of finger-marks.

Very few well-stratified sites have yet been adequately examined in the Atlantic province, but the range of material now available from Clickhimin, Jarlshof, Dun Mor Vaul, Dun Vulcan, Dun Bharabhat, Crosskirk, Bu Broch, etc., is at last allowing the copious material culture to be arranged in a sequence related to structural development. A first assessment of this was offered by MacKie (1965c, figure 6), but until more excavation has been undertaken and thoroughly published, details of sequential development and regionalism will remain unclear.

Childe believed that the broch culture arose as the result of intrusive elements emanating from south-west Britain (1935b, 237–9; 1946, 94). This view was expanded by Sir Lindsey Scott (1948), who attempted to show that the pottery, as well as the architecture and the rest of the material culture, could be derived directly from the south-west and that in his view the entire culture was introduced by ‘colonists’. MacKie (1965c) has argued convincingly for the indigenous development of the broch and the wheelhouse together with much of the ceramic tradition, but still retained the belief (1969a) in an immigration from the south some time in the first century BC. As D.V. Clarke (1970) has shown, however, the supposed evidence for immigration is entirely unconvincing and can all be explained in terms of trade and other forms of peaceful contact not requiring folk movement.

By the time of the Roman invasion, the Northern and Western Isles were very strongly defended by more than 500 families living in their

broch towers. The fact that in AD 43 a treaty was concluded between the Roman fleet and the Orcadian chieftains is perhaps indicative of their significance in the eyes of the Roman commanders. The treaty probably continued to be honoured, for when Agricola destroyed the mainland resistance in the battle of Mons Graupius in AD 84, he was able to claim that the conquest of Britain had been completed, though not before the islands had been visited by the Roman fleet.

In the ensuing peace the fortifications were gradually dismantled and were replaced by wheel-houses representing a resurgence of the native traditions of domestic architecture. Local economy flourished at first and trading relations were maintained with the Roman world, during which time luxury goods like glass and pottery together with a few coins trickled in, but with the collapse of the Roman administration in the south a decline set in and the material culture became much simpler until it was once more reduced to a level not unlike that of the Late Bronze Age.

10

The establishment of Roman control

The military history of Britain in the first century AD has received considerable attention from archaeologists and historians and need not be enlarged upon here, but it is necessary, for the sake of our theme, to examine the reaction of the native tribes of Britain to the threat and actuality of Roman rule.

In the early decades of the first century AD the presence of Rome just across the Channel was a political reality to which the British tribes had to relate. The Trinovantes/Catuvellauni seem to have been on friendly terms with Rome, and the quantity of trade goods and diplomatic gifts which poured into their territory is a measure of this relationship. Using the same yardstick it could be argued that the other coastal tribes – the Cantii, Atrebates and Durotriges – were far less favoured and may even have been hostile. Such a situation would not be at all surprising: the Cantii had opposed and attacked Caesar, the Atrebatian household was founded by Commius – a sworn enemy of Rome – while the Durotriges may have been punished and thereby impoverished for supporting the Armoricans in their revolt against Rome in 56 BC. But attitudes and allegiances established in the wake of the Gallic Wars are likely to have changed in the ninety years or so leading up to the conquest, especially if the growing strength of the Trinovantes/ Catuvellauni was seen as a threat by neighbouring tribes and perhaps also by the Roman authorities. Pressures of this kind would have created new hegemonies and new rivalries, while the immediacy of the Roman invasion threat might have encouraged the more opportunist leaders to alter their allegiances in the interests of expediency. Certainly the flight of the Atrebatian king, Verica, to Rome just before the invasion might suggest that the tribe was beginning to look to Rome as a patron in time of stress.

Tension was further heightened by the accession of the two Trinovantian or Catuvellaunian leaders Togodumnus and Caratacus in or very soon after AD 40, following the death of Cunobelin. The instability which must have been created by a change of leadership after so many years of unified rule may well have led to internal divisions within the tribe, in addition to a feeling of unease in the

surrounding areas. In about 42 Verica fled to Rome to ask for the help of the Emperor Claudius. No doubt Verica would have provided the emperor and his advisers with an up-to-date assessment of the political situation in Britain. Moreover, his flight could have been interpreted by the Roman propaganda machine as the expulsion of a friend and ally in whose interests military intervention in Britain was the only honourable course.

The invasion began towards the end of April AD 43. The exact geography of the first weeks is unclear. While it has traditionally been believed that the invasion force made a concentrated landing in Kent, in the vicinity of Richborough, it has plausibly been argued that the main landing took place on the Solent coast near Chichester (Manley 2002). In any event, the Romans' aim was to reach the Thames. After several unsuccessful skirmishes somewhere in the south-east, the British resistance army led by Caratacus and Togodumnus withdrew beyond a river and there pitted their whole weight against the Romans. For two days the river line was held, but Roman superiority of arms eventually triumphed. The battle was decisive. British opposition melted away; Togodumnus subsequently died in battle while Caratacus moved to the west to continue the fight, eventually ending up as a resistance leader in south Wales among the Silures. The dramatic collapse of centralized opposition in the south-east was rapidly followed up by the Roman advance across the Thames and the drive on the native capital at Camulodunum, led by the emperor himself. By the end of July the opposition of the south-eastern tribes had been totally smashed and all that remained was to mop up pockets of resistance and establish military control.

The relative ease of the initial stages of the advance had depended to a large extent upon a stable left flank, a stability which was provided by the buffering effect of the Atrebatian enclave in Sussex and east Hampshire. Had it not been for the presence of this friendly tribe, the hostile elements of the south-west could have created a serious threat to the extended Roman supply lines from the coastal supply bases. It was, then, very much in the Roman interest to ensure the political stability of the area. The flight of Verica to Rome implies unrest, but whether as the result of external threats or of internal differences is unknown. The Roman attitude was clear enough, for almost immediately there appears in the area a client king, Tiberius Claudius Togidubnus, who was later to style himself 'great king in Britain' (Bogaers 1979). Togidubnus has in the past been called Cogidubnus but here we have accepted the new reading proposed by Roger Tomlin (1997). While it is possible that he was left by Verica to hold on to the reins of government in his absence and was therefore already in power when the Romans landed, it could be argued either

that he was a Roman nominee selected at the time of the invasion from among the ruling household or, more likely, that he was a member of the Atrebatian aristocracy living in exile who was brought in by the army. An explanation in these terms would account for the rapid and dramatic Romanization of the kingdom in the thirty years following the invasion. Whether or not the main landing was in Kent, there is a good case for suggesting the landing of a military detachment in the Chichester region to stabilize the area and keep an eye on dissident elements. Such a force could have brought the king with it and established his right to rule by its very presence. A strongly pro-Roman client king could have been used as a diplomatic tool to persuade neighbouring rulers, uncertain of their allegiance, to support the Roman cause. Indeed it may have been through the good offices of Togidubnus that a king of the Dobunni capitulated while the Roman army was still fighting its way across the south-east.

Togidubnus was a success as a client king, for Tacitus records his faithful support of Rome into the 70s or 80s. Two inscriptions from Chichester serve to emphasize the extent of Romanization. One records the erection of a statue, probably equestrian, to Nero in AD 58, while the second, a dedicatory slab from a temple to Neptune and Minerva erected to the honour of the Divine House of the Emperor, probably in the early 80s, gives Togidubnus the title of great king, which he may have been granted as a supporter of Vespasian following the upheavals of AD 69. It has also been suggested that the great palatial building at Fishbourne, Sussex, may have been the residence of the king in his later years (Cunliffe 1971b). In total, the evidence for rapid and thorough Romanization is impressive, but that Togidubnus may at first have had difficulty with his subjects is hinted at by the growing evidence of military remains at Chichester, the possibility being that the king may have required a supporting garrison to establish and maintain his control at least in the early years of his reign. Nevertheless, from the Roman point of view the arrangement was a resounding success, as Tacitus puts it (*Agricola*, xiv), ‘an example of the long-established Roman custom of employing even kings to make others slaves’.

The Durotriges offered a more intractable problem. They remained culturally isolated from the tribes of the south-east, and in place of unified government it may well be that the tribe was split into smaller units owing allegiance to local chieftains. At any event it fell to Vespasian, leading the *Legio II Augusta*, to hack his way, one hillfort at a time, across Durotrigan territory late in 43 or early in 44. After taking the Isle of Wight, fighting thirty battles and destroying more than twenty hillforts, he could claim to have conquered two powerful tribes. Archaeological traces of the campaign are vivid ([Figure 10.1](#)).

At the time, native forts like Hod Hill, Maiden Castle and South Cadbury were being actively strengthened in archaic defensive styles, and it is probable that many of the other Dorset sites were being brought into defensive order to meet the threat. Actual attack can be demonstrated at several forts. At Hod Hill the chieftain's hut was softened up by ballista fire from a tower sited close to the defences, as is shown by the concentration and distribution of iron ballista bolts around the hut. How the inhabitants responded is unknown, but shortly afterwards the fort was cleared and a Roman garrison housed in one corner. Maiden Castle succumbed to a violent attack in which a number of its defenders were cut down in close fighting or killed by ballista fire, their bodies later to be buried hurriedly, but in native style, in a cemetery at the east entrance (but see p. 229). At Spettisbury, on the other hand, a number of bodies together with fragments of their equipment were bundled unceremoniously in a large pit, possibly at the hands of the Roman army tidying up after an attack. As more of the Dorset hillforts are excavated similar evidence will no doubt come to light, although all were not necessarily assaulted at this time. Tiresome though this method of warfare must have been to the Romans, it posed little real difficulty, for the hillforts of the southwest were designed to withstand local raids rather than Roman siege methods. Nevertheless, the strength of the resistance demanded the garrisoning of a number of separate contingents at strategic points throughout the territory, simply to remind the Durotriges of the military presence.

The reference in Suetonius' account of the conquest of *two* tribes in the south-west raises questions to which there are at present no clear answers. It is generally assumed that the second tribe was the Dumnonii but the early military dispositions hardly support this. On balance, it would seem more reasonable to suppose that the area referred to was Salisbury Plain north of the Nadder and west of the Test, which had originally been under Atrebatian domination, but may, by the time of the Conquest, have split with the pro-Roman rulers and become allied with one of the anti-Roman tribes – either the Dobunni or the Durotriges. It may even have been under some form of Catuvellaunian control. At any event, many of the hillforts of the region appear to have been maintained in defensive order, although firm archaeological evidence of attack is at present wanting. That the region was regarded as administratively, and presumably culturally, separate from the surrounding tribes is shown in its classification by the Roman authorities as part of the administrative region of the Belgae.

The political situation among the Dobunni at the time of the invasion is difficult to ascertain but Dio records that a king of the

Dobunni offered his submission to Rome. This could imply that the entire tribe went over to the Roman side but it need only have been a faction. Culturally the tribal area was divided into two separate entities, roughly by the Bristol Avon (pp. 189–90), and in the Roman administrative reorganization of the province the southern territory was incorporated into an artificial creation, *civitas Belgarum*. One possible explanation for these facts is that the northern core of the Dobunni, based on Bagendon, threw in their lot with Rome, perhaps as a reaction to the Catuvellaunian dominance which they appear to have suffered, while the loosely attached southern group went their own way, opposing Rome and paying the price for their opposition by losing their identity. Both regions were, however, garrisoned as part of the military frontier zone, anchored to the line of the Fosse Way running parallel to the Severn–Trent axis.

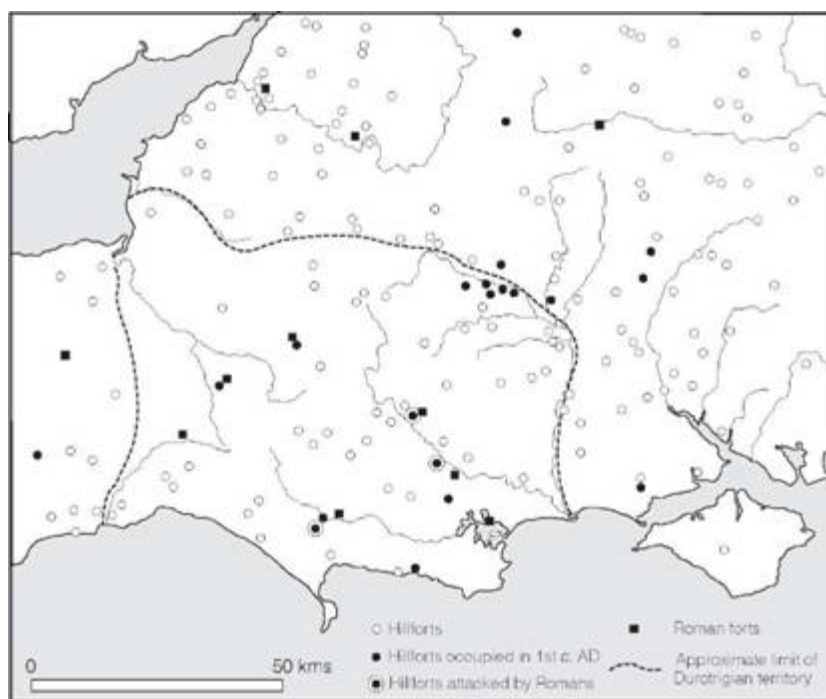


Figure 10.1 Native and Roman forts among the Durotriges (source: Ordnance Survey, *Map of Southern Britain in the Iron Age*, with additions).

The northern neighbours of the Trinovantes, the Iceni of East Anglia, submitted to Rome immediately after the initial stage of the invasion, their leader being among the eleven kings who offered their support to Claudius. The identity of the king is unknown but it may

well have been Prasutagus who remained faithful to Rome until his death. As a Roman client king he continued to issue silver coins bearing a Roman bust and the legend SUBRI PRASTO on the obverse and a horse with the words ESICO FECIT on the reverse. The client kingdom came to a dramatic end with the king's death in AD 60, and the revolt, consequent upon it, led by his wife Boudica.

The political attitudes of the two remaining tribes in the Midlands, the Corieltavi and the Cornovii, are not recorded, but the apparent ease with which the Roman frontier was constructed across the land belonging to the former and close to the territory of the latter would suggest some kind of treaty relationship. Quite possibly the Corieltavi, along with the Iceni and Dobunni, were suffering from the expansionist policies of their south-eastern neighbours and regarded the Romans as the lesser of the two evils.

Thus by AD 47 the most civilized part of Britain – the area south and east of the Fosse frontier – had been thoroughly subdued by the army and, apart from the client kingdoms of the Iceni and the Regni (as the southern Atrebates were called), the region was now under direct military control ([Figure 10.2](#)). The positioning of the first frontier zone along the Jurassic Ridge is interesting. In adopting this line the Roman strategists were choosing a natural axis of communication fronted by an almost continuous river line – the Severn–Trent axis – but they were also using the three peripheral tribes, the Durotriges, Dobunni and Corieltavi as their military zone, leaving the south-eastern core tribes and the friendly Iceni to develop into the province while excluding the underdeveloped tribes of the west and north. The use of the peripheral zone as a frontier shows a keen understanding of the political geography of the country.

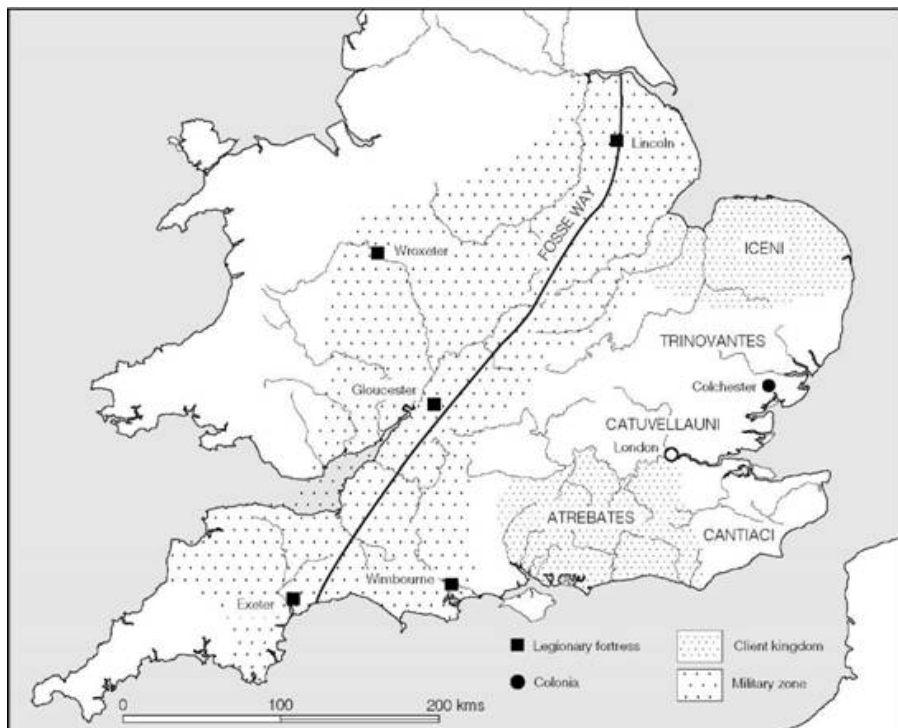


Figure 10.2 *Southern Britain in the decades following the invasion of AD 43 (source: Cunliffe 1988a).*

To the west and north of the Fosse frontier were less congenial regions, difficult to conquer and of uncertain productive capacity. These evidently lay beyond Roman territorial desires, but those tribes immediately adjacent to the frontier had to be brought into some form of relationship with the new government. The Dumnonii in the south-west peninsula were probably quite friendly: they had, after all, been trading freely with foreigners for centuries. Moreover, the frontier and the military presence at Exeter successfully isolated the peninsula and rendered the tribe of little potential danger. In the Midlands were the Dobunni, part of whose territory lay inside the military zone and who were therefore forced to behave, and the Cornovii, with whom a treaty had probably been negotiated. Finally, across the north of Britain from sea to sea lay a complex of tribes dominated by the Brigantes, whose loyalty to Rome was at most times evident but precarious. Thus the Dobunni and Cornovii were employed as buffer states against Wales, while the Brigantes served to absorb pressures from the northern tribes.

Native resistance had been virtually wiped out in the south-east but, with the powerful war-leader Caratacus, the focus of the anti-Roman

movement moved to south Wales, to the territory of the Silures whence, in the winter of 47–8, he launched a fierce attack against a tribe allied to Rome – presumably the Dobunni in the Severn valley. This event, and the growing strength of the British resistance which it represented, forced the new Roman governor Ostorius Scapula to adopt a more aggressive military policy which entailed occupying the west Midlands and thus isolating the tribes of Wales from the Brigantes. To gain the necessary mastery of the Bristol Channel, Dumnonia had to be occupied as well. The preparations did not go unnoticed by the free Britons: the advance into the territory of the Deceagli in north Wales was greeted by a minor uprising among the Brigantes or one of their clients, some of whom may have considered their independence further threatened by this move, while the disarming of the south-eastern tribes, a necessary precaution to protect the Roman rear, was met by a revolt in Icenian territory which had to be put down by an auxiliary detachment.

After these preparations had been consolidated and the consequent unrest dealt with, the army moved against Caratacus, first in Silurian territory and then into the Ordovician lands of north Wales where Caratacus had now moved, presumably to be closer to his escape route to the north. After a while Caratacus finally abandoned his guerrilla tactic and chose to make a stand at a strongly fortified hill-top. The battle was lost and he was forced to flee to the Brigantes, whose Queen Cartimandua handed him over to the Roman authorities in AD 51. The capture of the war leader did not, however, mean the end of Welsh resistance, which was to last for nearly thirty years more. In 51 or 52 the Silures defeated a legion, inflicting very considerable casualties, but during the later 50s they were gradually worn down by the continuous campaigning of Didius Gallus and kept under some form of control by the establishment of forts. But at this time the Roman intention was not to conquer: it was merely to destroy resistance and thus remove the threat to the frontier.

Imperial policy changed dramatically in AD 58 with the arrival of Q. Veranius, whose orders were evidently to conquer the rest of Britain. A single season's campaigning among the Silures was sufficient to smash their resistance once and for all. When the next season's campaign began in 59 (under the command of Suetonius Paullinus) the army was able to concentrate on the north, presumably weakening the resistance of the Ordovices before marching against the Druid stronghold on Anglesey, described by Tacitus as a 'source of strength to the rebels' (*Agricola*, xiv) – a reference, no doubt, to the widespread respect and power which the Druids still held as well as to the island's function as a haven for refugees. Tacitus' description of the storming of the island is vivid: 'The enemy lined the shore in a

dense armed mass. Among them were black-robed women with dishevelled hair like Furies, brandishing torches. Nearby stood the Druids raising their hands to heaven and screaming dreadful curses.’ Overcoming their fear, the Roman soldiers pushed on to victory and destroyed ‘the groves devoted to Mona’s barbarous superstitions’ (*Annals* xiv, 30).

The annexing of Anglesey meant the end to organized resistance in Wales, but before consolidation could be undertaken, the Boudican rebellion broke out, requiring the full attention of the army in the south-east. Fourteen years passed before the Welsh problem was faced again, by which time old wounds had healed and a new generation of fighters had emerged. From 74 to 77 Julius Frontinus campaigned to and fro across the principality, suffering some serious setbacks, but by the end of his term of office most of the area had been subdued and it only remained for the next governor, Julius Agricola, to complete the work in a single campaign in AD 78. Thereafter the Ordovices and Silures were kept in the firm grip of a complex of permanent forts and roads. Other tribes like the Demetae of the south-west, who are never recorded as having opposed Rome, were left to develop in peaceful isolation.

While the Welsh tribes on the western border of the province were gradually being beaten into submission, trouble broke out among the northern confederacy of the Brigantes. The first hint of unrest (*discordiae*) occurred in 47–8 as a result of the Roman thrust into Flintshire. It was serious enough to compel the Roman general to return, but ‘after a few who began the hostilities had been slain and the rest pardoned, the Brigantes settled down quietly’ (Tacitus, *Annals* xii, 32). The use of the word ‘discord’ to describe the uprising tends to suggest internal troubles, which were probably put down by the ruling house without the need for Roman help. It was probably a minor incident but it heralded the split between the pro-Roman and anti-Roman factions which was eventually to destroy the confederacy.

Caratacus must have been relying on the strength of the anti-Roman feeling when in 51 he fled into Brigantia ‘seeking the protection of Queen Cartimandua’, but he had misjudged the situation and was immediately turned over to the Roman authorities. Such an act is best seen as an attempt by the queen to demonstrate a loyalty to Rome and to underline her own position of power in the eyes of the army of occupation. She had, after all, just witnessed the overwhelming successes of the Roman forces in Wales; some token of loyalty may have been deemed necessary to prevent Roman intervention in her kingdom.

Within the next seven years, however, the unified rule of the confederacy began to split up. A quarrel broke out between

Cartimandua and her husband Venutius, both of whom had previously been loyal to Rome. Civil war followed, Venutius immediately assuming an anti-Roman position and, by doing so, taking upon himself the mantle of resistance leader of the free Britons.

Cartimandua, 'by cunning stratagems, captured the brothers and kinsfolk of Venutius' (Tacitus, *Annals* xii, 40), which understandably annoyed him and led him to invade her part of the kingdom. The position became so serious that it was eventually necessary for a Roman legion to be sent some time about 57–8, with the purpose of keeping the two sides apart.

Matters finally came to a head during the confusion of the year 69.

Inspired by the differences between the Roman forces, and by the many rumours of civil war that reached them, the Britons plucked up courage under the leadership of Venutius who, in addition to his natural spirit and hatred of the Roman name, was fired by personal resentment towards Queen Cartimandua.

(Tacitus, *Hist.* iii, 45)

One of the reasons for Venutius' evident distaste for his wife was that she had married his armour-bearer Vellocatus. 'So Venutius, calling in aid from outside, and at the same time assisted by a revolt among the Brigantes themselves, put Cartimandua into an extremely dangerous position.' Cartimandua was forced to ask the Roman administration for military assistance but even the intervention of a substantial contingent of cavalry and infantry could do little more than snatch the queen from danger. Thus by c. 70 'the throne was left to Venutius, the war to us'.

The narrative of Tacitus leaves very little doubt that the north was now in a state of widespread open rebellion led by the Brigantes, backed up by tribes extending far north into the interior. For the Roman province to the south the situation was serious. Immediately Vespasian had gained the throne and the civil disturbances were at an end, the new governor of Britain, Petillius Cerialis, began a three-year campaign in the north from 71–4 ([Figure 10.3](#)). 'After a series of battles, some not uncostly, Cerialis had operated, if not actually triumphed, over the major part of the [Brigantian] territory' (Tacitus, *Agricola*, xvii). During this time Brigantian resistance must have been smashed and Venutius defeated, for in spite of a lull of five years or so while Wales was being subdued, there was little further trouble in the area when Agricola began his thrust to the far north. By the early 80s the whole of Brigantia was enmeshed in a close-knit network of forts and roads, which divided the old confederacy into a multiplicity of easily patrolled fragments.

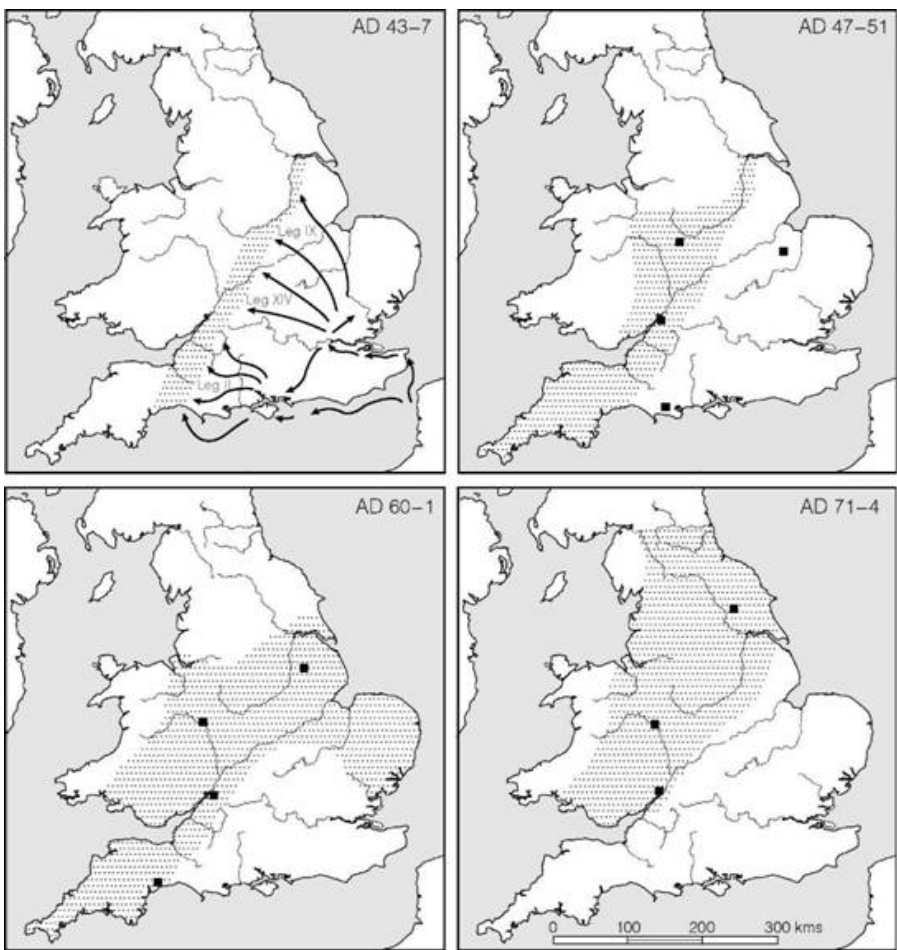


Figure 10.3 The Roman conquest of southern Britain. The military zone is stippled; black squares indicate legionary bases (sources: various).

In the three decades during which the Roman armies were forced to subdue the warlike peoples of Wales and the Pennines, the Romanization of the south-east was being completed, but in spite of a deliberate and well-used programme employing client kings, making substantial monetary loans to noble families, founding *coloniae* and undertaking elaborate schemes of urban building, progress was by no means smooth. The first hints that all was not well occurred in AD 47, when some of the Icenian tribesmen, objecting to being disarmed, organized a resistance movement and constructed fortifications. The revolt was easily put down but it must have shown the authorities that a certain instability existed in the client kingdom of the Iceni.

Trouble came to a head in 59–60 with the death of Prasutagus. In his will he had adopted the wise procedure of making the emperor

joint heir with his two daughters, but it is evident from what followed that the Roman administration intended to absorb the client kingdom into the province, quite probably because it was regarded as a point of instability. The Icenian nobles, led by Boudica, resisted, with the result that a military detachment was sent in;

the first outrage was the flogging of his wife Boudica and the rape of his daughters: then the Icenian nobles were deprived of their ancestral estates... these outrages, and the fear of worse now that they had been reduced to the status of a province, moved the Icenians to arms.

(Tacitus, Annals xiv, 32)

The time was ripe for rebellion, for a new generation of fighters had grown up, the Roman army was heavily occupied in Anglesey and there was a widespread dissatisfaction with Roman fiscal measures.

The Icenians were not alone: their neighbours to the south, the Trinovantes, joined in together with 'other tribes who were unsubdued by slavery' (*ibid.*, 32), implying help from beyond the Fosse frontier, perhaps from the Brigantes. The Trinovantes had a particular reason for dissatisfaction, for it was at the site of their tribal capital, Camulodunum, that the Romans had established a *colonia* which had entailed the appropriation of thousands of hectares of the surrounding farmland for the veterans now settled there. To make the situation even worse, the government had built a temple to the emperor Claudius in the *colonia* – no doubt in an attempt to refocus the religious feeling of the natives on the empire and away from Druidic nationalism. The policy misfired.

The revolt which followed was violent: London, Camulodunum and Verulamium were destroyed, the Ninth Legion was driven back and the procurator fled to Gaul.

The Britons had no thought of taking prisoners or selling them as slaves, nor for any of the usual commerce of war, but only of slaughter, the gibbet, fire and the cross. They knew they would have to pay the penalty: meantime they hurried on to extract vengeance in advance.

(ibid., 33)

It is evident that in the initial stages, the rebellion succeeded more by its fury than by its planning. Gradually, as the impetus was dissipated, the power of the rebels waned and eventually Boudica was forced to accept a set battle at a site chosen by the Roman commander, Suetonius Paullinus, probably because winter was approaching and food supplies were running short. British fighting

tactics had changed little since the invasions of Caesar: cavalry and infantry were mixed up, chariots were still used, and women and children came along as spectators to watch the fight. It was a classic contest with British enthusiasm pitted against Roman order. Inevitably British resistance broke:

The Romans did not spare the women, and the bodies of the baggage-animals, pierced with spears, were added to the piles of corpses. It was a glorious victory equal to those of the good old days: some estimate as many as 80,000 British dead . . . Boudica ended her life with poison.

(*ibid.*, 37)

The situation among the Durotriges seems to have been tense throughout the revolt and indeed the military commander thought it expedient to remain there rather than join the army of Paullinus as he was commanded. Some hint of the trouble comes from the hillfort of South Cadbury, Somerset, where a war cemetery quite possibly dating to the Boudican period has been found. This raises the possibility that the famous Maiden Castle war cemetery may also be of this date rather than belonging to the initial advance in AD 43 but the dating evidence is too imprecise to be sure.

The situation did not ease with the British defeat. 'The territory of all tribes that had been hostile or neutral was laid waste with fire and sword. But famine was the worst of the hardships, for they had omitted to sow crops.' The events of 60–1 must have reduced eastern England to a virtual desert, and not until Paullinus was replaced could the process of reconstruction begin. Indeed, it was to take ten years before the province was stable enough for there to be renewed military activity in the north.

As we have seen, much of Brigantia had been explored by Cerialis in 71–4 and some part of the area must have been thoroughly garrisoned, sufficient at least to prevent further trouble from recalcitrant tribesmen. With the arrival of the new governor, Julius Agricola, in the summer of AD 78, a new forward policy was initiated. After tidying up the occupation of north Wales, Agricola could concentrate on the conquest of the north (Figure 10.4). He spent the campaigning season of 79 consolidating the somewhat tentative occupation of Brigantia, probably as far north as the Tyne–Solway line. By a series of minor plundering raids followed up by bribes, he was able to take control of the entire region, including some tribes which had previously been outside the Roman sphere of interest. The ease with which Brigantia was thus absorbed is a clear reflection of the success of the Cerialian campaigns and presumably of the spread of the enervating luxuries of Romanization from the south. The spirit

of resistance and the unity of the area had been smashed.

To the north of the Brigantes lay three tribes: the Novantae of the south-west lowlands, the Selgovae in the centre and the Votadini occupying the east coast. Since it was probably from these tribes that Venutius had received help ten years earlier, they were clearly regarded as a potential threat to the security of the Roman province and had to be brought under Roman control. Accordingly, in 80 Agricola marched north, forcing his way to the river Tay. After wintering in Scotland, he spent the next year building forts and roads with the evident intention of consolidating the Clyde–Forth line as a frontier. ‘This neck was now secured by garrisons, and the whole sweep of country to the south was safe in our hands. The enemy had been pushed into what was virtually another island’ (Tacitus, *Agricola*, xxiii). Much of the military activity in the lowlands was concentrated in Selgovian territory, where presumably the main resistance lay. The old tribal centre on Eildon Hill may have been slighted at this time, and the principal Roman fort of the whole northern system was built close by at Newstead. The Votadini, on the other hand, were less harshly treated: fewer forts were established in their territory and their tribal capital on Traprain Law was allowed to remain in occupation. The Novantae of south-western Scotland, together with other more remote tribes, were the subject of a separate campaign in 82, at the end of which Agricola stood on the shore and looked across to Ireland, estimating that it could be conquered and held with a single legion and a few auxiliaries.

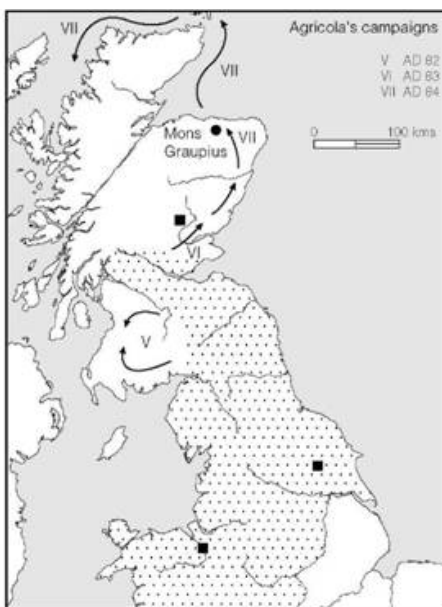
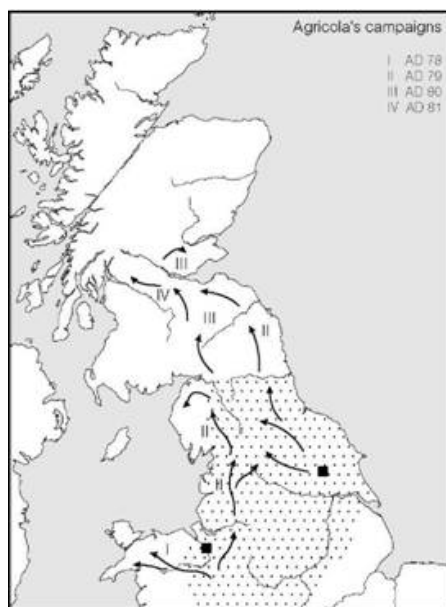


Figure 10.4 *The Roman conquest of northern Britain. The military zone is stippled; black squares indicate legionary bases (sources: various).*

So far the army had met with little organized opposition, but when in the next spring they moved north again along the eastern coastal plain beyond the Tay, Caledonian resistance began to harden. Even with the support of sea-borne supplies and reinforcements, Roman communications were seriously stretched, but gradually forts were established at the mouths of the glens to bottle up the tribesmen in the mountains, and the Roman hold strengthened. Once they had overcome their initial surprise at the speed of the Roman advance, the Caledonians began to organize a more aggressive resistance, culminating in the attack on a Roman fort which only narrowly escaped destruction. 'With unbroken spirit', says Tacitus, 'they persisted in arming their whole fighting force, putting their wives and children in places of safety and ratifying their league by conference and sacrifice' (*Agricola*, xxvii).

Thus by the beginning of the summer of AD 84 the scene was set for the final confrontation between the two armies at Mons Graupius. 'The Britons, undaunted by the loss of the previous battle, welcomed the choice between revenge and enslavement... Already more than 30,000 of them made a gallant show, and still they came flocking to the colours' (Tacitus, *Agricola*, xxix). To the Caledonians, pushed literally to the edge of Britain, this was clearly the last stand. As their war leader Calgacus is reported to have said in his pre-battle oration:

We, the last men on earth, the last of the free, have been shielded till today by the very remoteness of the seclusion for which we are famed... but today the boundary of Britain is exposed; beyond us lies no nation, nothing but waves and rocks.

Even if the actual words are those of Tacitus (*Agricola*, xxxii), it is tempting to believe that the sentiments are accurately reported.

The battle was fought, the Britons lost: the final organized resistance of free Britain had fallen and with it 10,000 British casualties. The last words must be left with Tacitus:

The Britons wandered all over the countryside, men and women together, wailing, carrying off their wounded and calling out to the survivors. They would leave their homes and in fury set fire to them... sometimes they would try to organize plans... sometimes the sight of their dear ones broke their hearts... The next day revealed the quality of the victory more clearly. A grim silence reigned on every hand; the hills were deserted, only

*here and there was smoke seen rising from chimneys in the distance and
our scouts found no one to encounter them.*

(ibid., xxxviii)

Part III

Themes

11

Themes

The mass of data recovered from the soil of Britain, which reflects upon the life of Iron Age communities, is very considerable but it is at best a partial statement of the reality of Iron Age being. Everything that has been recovered comes to us through a series of filters. Objects have had to be discarded or selected for deposition rather than being destroyed or recycled. The burial conditions have had to be suitable to encourage preservation and the object has had to be discovered, by accident or design, and been considered worthy of retention. Only a minute percentage of Iron Age material culture has come down to us, and what survives is by no means a random sample of what once existed.

Much the same can be said of the settlement or burial context in which the material remains are found. The majority of the settlements are little more than negative traces – pits and post-holes – interspersed with rubbish. Except in waterlogged conditions the organic component seldom survives. Only in areas where stone is plentiful do the superstructure and internal fittings of settlements sometimes remain. The ravages of time and, more recently, accelerated destruction by ploughing and reafforestation are fast destroying what little structural evidence has survived.

Given this partial and fragmentary database it is understandably difficult to know where to begin to reconstruct the life of the Iron Age communities who inhabited Britain.

The best-preserved body of data is undoubtedly the physical evidence of Iron Age settlements. Many thousands are known and, of these, hundreds have been examined by excavation, some of them on a comparatively large scale. The settlement evidence from Britain is fuller than that from any other country in Europe. In the section to follow, though four chapters are devoted to settlement, the treatment barely does justice to the richness and variety of the record. Considerable regional variation is apparent and hints of social differentiation can be seen. The emergence of hillforts in the centre south is indicative of a more complex level of social organization while the oppida of the first century BC and early first century AD, though still ill-known, must imply a degree of socio-economic complexity never before seen in the country. Through the settlement

evidence therefore glimpses of social order and social change can be had.

Evidence for food-producing strategies is fast growing as the systematic retrieval of animal bones and flotation techniques to gather grain and other seeds become normal practice on excavations. Integrated environmental studies are now well under way and in combination with regional sampling strategies are beginning to reveal the rich complexity of the potential data. The chapter dealing with food-producing strategies ([chapter 16](#)) is at best a very summary statement of one of the fastest growing fields in Iron Age studies.

The artefacts themselves allow several themes to be developed. The productive capacity of the communities is considered in [chapter 18](#) focusing on craft, industry and art. Here again current work on characterizing materials and examining waste products such as slag is opening up new fields, reflecting both the technological capacity of the population and the networks of exchange which supplied them with raw materials.

The recognition of imported goods and their local copies touches upon the complex question of interactions with the Continent ([chapter 17](#)). To what extent these exchanges were the result of normal social intercourse or were driven by external forces such as folk movement and the aggressive marketing practices of Mediterranean states are difficult, but not uninteresting, questions to approach. The dataset is not yet susceptible to the statistical treatment necessary if the study is to advance from the purely descriptive. But for the last century or so before the Roman invasion classical sources throw some light on the question.

Finally we come to altogether more difficult questions of behaviour. Warfare, death and religion are three convenient headings under which to begin to consider these matters. But here the archaeological data are poor and the subject obscure, not least because of the difficulty which modern observers face in attempting to explain prehistoric behaviour patterns. The dangers inherent in overinterpretation are many.

In the section to follow, therefore, the different strands of evidence are teased out and displayed as simply as possible to expose their quality. What we are doing is to identify the elements of social reconstruction and arrange some of them into simple systems. The interrelationships of those systems and their complex feedback mechanisms we will consider in the final section.

12

Settlement and the settlement pattern in the south-east

When Aulus Plautius established the Fosse frontier in the years AD 44–7 he was simply emphasizing a geographical and political truth. Britain could be divided into two parts about a line drawn along the Jurassic Ridge from Lincoln to Lyme Bay. To the south and east lay a densely settled region with authority centralized about oppida and with a subsistence economy depending to a large extent on the production of grain. To the north and west settlement was more scattered and in places sparse, there was little centralization of power and, while cereals were widely grown, there appears to have been a greater reliance on stock rearing. To the Roman military mind the south-east was clearly the part to become a province, for grain was an immensely valuable commodity and arable farmers, because of their dependence upon the seasons, were sedentary and thus easier to control. Admittedly, Plautius was seeing Iron Age Britain at its most developed, after 150 years or more of close contact with the Continent, but this basic geographical divide was equally relevant in the earlier period and played a considerable part in influencing the form, density and distribution of settlements.

Settlement is a complex subject since settlements interact with landscape in a continuum of time. To parcel up the subject tidily for the purposes of discussion certain arbitrary divisions must be made. Settlements vary in size from single houses providing shelter for families to vast oppida encompassing a range of functions. In this chapter and the next two we will consider the lower end of this range – homestead, hamlet and village – leaving larger agglomerations like hill-forts and oppida, which represent coercive powers commanding a greater input of social effort, for separate treatment. Even so there will be some overlap, especially in the discussion of house form. There is a similar problem with subsistence economy, which is intimately bound up with settlement morphology and location, but to discuss it along with the settlements themselves would be cumbersome. Thus a separate chapter is devoted to food production, where there will be some discussion of the socio-economic systems which linked production strategies to settlement form.

The ridge of Jurassic limestone provides a convenient notional western limit for the southeastern zone but it is convenient to stray beyond it on occasion to include such areas as the Somerset wetlands, and the valleys of the Worcestershire Avon and the Trent. The south-eastern zone itself is geologically varied but the lighter soils of the limestone hills, the chalk uplands and the river gravels were particularly conducive to Iron Age agricultural techniques and were accordingly more densely settled than the less hospitable sands and the more densely wooded clay lands. These factors to a large extent influence the availability of archaeological data. It is on the chalklands of Wessex and the Sussex Downs and on the gravel terraces of the Midland rivers that most of the excavated sites lie, and these regions must of necessity bulk large in the discussion, but other smaller and more varied regions have also been included to show something of the range of sites available for study.

The settlements of the southern chalklands

The chalklands of Wessex and Sussex were densely occupied in the Iron Age and the number of known settlements runs into thousands, but of these fewer than thirty have been excavated on a scale sufficient to allow worthwhile generalizations to be made. In areas where systematic plotting from air photographs has been attempted, as for example between the Test and the Bourne (Palmer 1984), something of the complexity of the landscape and the great variety of settlement components can begin to be appreciated, emphasizing the problems inherent in any form of classification. Nevertheless certain recurring patterns emerge which allow 'types' to be defined, albeit tentatively.

Middle–Late Bronze Age settlements

The characteristics of the settlements belonging to the thirteenth to eighth centuries have already been referred to in some detail above (pp. 43–8). Normally the inhabited area was enclosed by a bank in which the timbers of a palisade or a thickset hedge were based (although traces do not always survive), and each enclosure was provided with a gate of simple construction. Within the enclosed area, which averaged 0.4–0.8 ha, was a simple circular hut, or sometimes more than one, arranged so as to leave sufficient space around for the more domestic activities of the farm to be carried out. Sometimes, as at New Barn Down, Sussex, the total settlement consisted of only two enclosures, but at Plumpton Plain A, Sussex, there were found to be at least three broadly contemporary huts arranged along a trackway, while at Itford Hill, Sussex, seven or eight conjoined enclosures, not

all contemporary, were found, with at least three more isolated huts scattered further away. Evidently, while some settlements were individual farmsteads, others may have taken on the aspect of hamlets or even small villages.

The settlement at Shearplace Hill, Dorset, which belongs to the late second millennium, was enclosed by a substantial and well-cut ditch backed by a bank with no signs of a palisade but possibly capped by a thorn hedge. Ditches are also present at Boscombe Down East, Wilts., and various sites on the Marlborough Downs; but at the Sussex sites, most of which are early first millennium in date, ditches (if they occur at all) are insignificant features, the emphasis being placed more upon the palisade embedded in a bank. While, for the most part, Middle–Late Bronze Age settlements appear to be short-lived, a number of sites are known in eastern Hampshire, where rectangular enclosures of early first-millennium AD date continue to be occupied or are replaced by larger enclosures of Early Iron Age date. The sites include Meon Hill, New Buildings, Old Down Farm and probably Houghton Down (Cunliffe 2000, 152–4). How widespread continuity of this kind was it is difficult at present to say.

Palisaded enclosures

Palisaded enclosures containing settlements of various sizes are a common feature of Iron Age settlement pattern in eastern Scotland (pp. 312–18), but a widespread, if sporadic, occurrence over the rest of Britain is sufficient to show that enclosures of this kind were a normal element in the mid-first-millennium settlement pattern over many parts of the country. The most extensively excavated of the southern British palisaded settlements is Little Woodbury, Wilts., where two phases in the continuous occupation of the site can tentatively be recognized (see [Figures 12.2](#) and [12.3](#)). In the first phase the farm was enclosed by a palisade traced only on the east side, where a four-post gate – the principal entry to the compound – was uncovered. Within lay a large circular hut 13.7 m in diameter, with its entrance porch aligned exactly upon the gate.

The extent of the palisaded enclosure is unknown, but the ditched enclosure which replaced it defended about 1.6 ha, which may well approximate to the area of the original. Within the enclosure many domestic activities have left their mark. Behind the house lay a large irregular working hollow where grain parching and cooking were probably carried out. Corn was stored in rectangular four-post granaries, usually placed around the periphery of the enclosure, while hay, and possibly seed corn in the ear, was hung up on two-post racks to dry. At a later stage, in the fourth to second centuries, grain storage in large underground silos became widespread; these pits, later used

for rubbish disposal, were found in large numbers. A high proportion of those from Little Woodbury relate to the later phase of the site's occupation. Other aspects of the day-to-day routine were carried out within the enclosure – processes such as the grinding of corn, spinning, weaving, leather-working, basketry, etc., and on occasion animals in need of special attention may have been temporarily tethered inside.

The date of the early-phase occupation cannot be given with precision, but the earliest assemblage of pottery belongs to the All Cannings Cross–Meon Hill style, of the sixth to fifth centuries, while a few scraps of Kimmeridge–Caburn wares might suggest a beginning within the seventh century or a little earlier, but these fragments may be nothing more than the survival of archaic types.

The second Wiltshire site to have begun life as a palisaded enclosure is Swallowcliffe, where the initial occupation is approximately contemporary with that of Little Woodbury. The excavation, however, was carried out before the development of modern techniques, and apart from pits little else of structural significance was found. In Hampshire the excavations at Meon Hill and Houghton Down near Stockbridge ([Figure 12.1](#)) provided further evidence of palisaded settlements, again related to the All Cannings Cross–Meon Hill style of pottery. As at Little Woodbury, the old palisaded enclosure was replaced by a bank and a ditch of hillfort proportions. A further example of just such a replacement occurred at the Caburn, Sussex, in the phase pre-dating the hillfort. Here little of the early plan can now be recovered, but a length of palisade trench outside the entrance to the later fort and two huts just inside, together with several pits, represent the initial phase producing pottery of the Kimmeridge–Caburn style of seventh-century date.

Excavations at other southern British hillforts have occasionally suggested the pre-existence of palisaded settlements. Quarley Hill and Danebury, Hants, Blewburton Hill, Oxon., and Wilbury, Herts., have produced some evidence of early palisades but work has never been on a sufficient scale to show whether or not the later defences exactly followed the lines of the earlier enclosures. If they did, it would have to be supposed that fenced enclosures exceeding 6 ha in extent were being built in the first half of the first millennium.

Two other sites deserve mention: at Hollingbury and Park Brow, both in Sussex, trenches belonging to palisaded enclosures of rectangular plan have been partly excavated. Three sides of the Park Brow enclosure – each some 30–37 m – were examined, while at Hollingbury only one side 46 m long with a central entrance came to light. Since the plans are therefore incomplete and the enclosed areas have not been extensively excavated, speculation as to function is

difficult, but these may have been specialized structures, perhaps even religious enclosures, and not settlement sites at all.

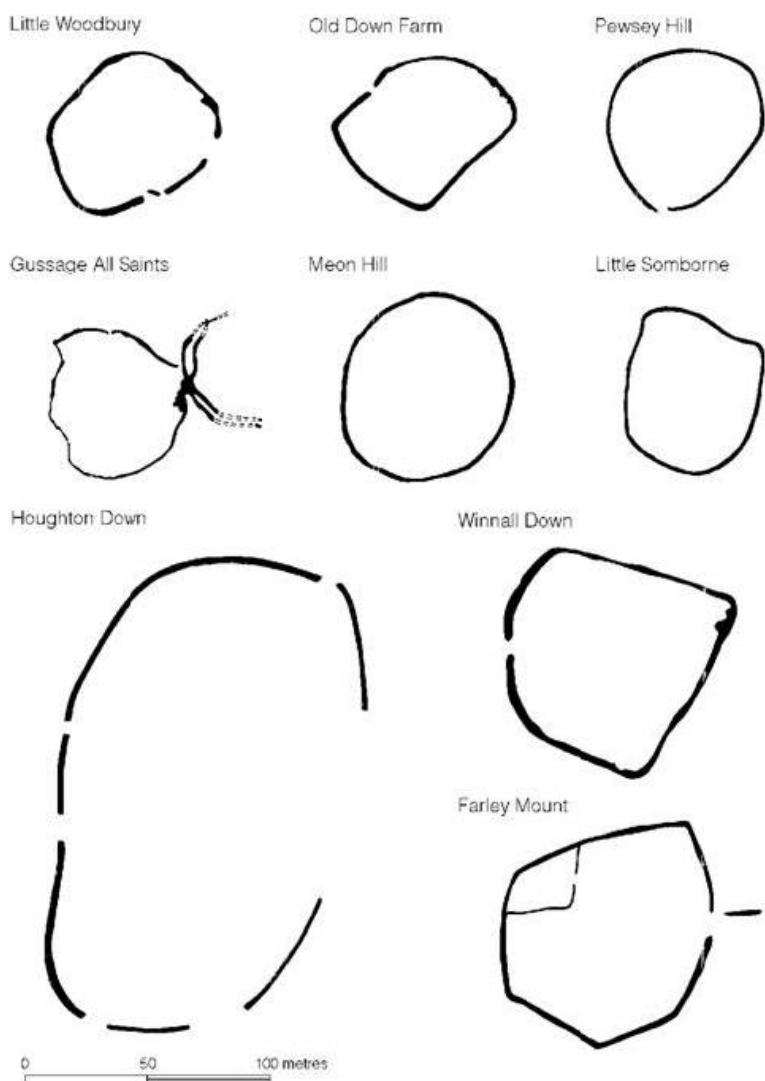


Figure 12.1 Settlements on the Wessex chalklands (source: Cunliffe 1984c based on various sources with additions).

Sufficient has been said to show that in the period from the seventh to the fifth century a number of settlements in southern Britain were surrounded by fences bedded in palisade trenches. Since the emphasis of the earlier first-millennium enclosures was also upon a vertical timber barrier rather than ditches or banks, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the later palisades were an indigenous development from

these earlier beginnings. Details of the settlements themselves are few, but most of the recorded palisades enclosed individual farms and it may well be that most of the farms of the period were palisaded, but the point is difficult to demonstrate. That some of the hillforts were preceded by palisaded enclosures of comparable size shows that the palisade idea was not restricted to small settlements alone.

Earthwork-enclosed settlements (Figure 12.1)

At Little Woodbury, Meon Hill, Houghton Down and the Caburn, palisades had been replaced by ditched enclosures by the Middle Iron Age. The class of earthwork-enclosed settlement which they typify can usually, but not invariably, be shown to belong to this later period.

Little Woodbury in its later phase can be taken as a type-site for the class (Figures 12.2 and 12.3). Excavation has shown that the palisade was replaced by a ditch some 3.4 m wide by 2 m deep, which must once have been backed by a bank of chalk dug from it. The ditch enclosed a roughly circular area some 1.6 ha in extent, provided with a single wide entrance, apparently without a gate, from which two linear ditches radiated out like antennae.

Even more informative has been the excavation at Gussage All Saints, Wilts., where two pre-Durotrigan phases have been recognized (Figures 12.1 and 12.4). In the first, which can be dated on the basis of radiocarbon assessment and artefacts to about the fifth century, a 1.2 ha enclosure was surrounded by a ditch 1.2 m wide and 0.8 m deep, apparently with an external bank. The enclosure was provided with a complex entrance flanked by antennae ditches. Within were found an area of pits and, towards the centre, a group of four-post structures of 'granary' type. No houses were recognized, but had there been stake-built structures all trace would have been destroyed by subsequent ploughing. In the second phase a more substantial ditch was dug, 2.2 m wide and 1.4 m deep, approximately on the line of the original ditch, and the entrance antennae ditches were remodelled on either side of an elaborate timber gateway. Within, pits continued to be dug and circular gullies indicate the locations of huts. Radiocarbon dates suggest that occupation lasted from the third to the second century, during which time undecorated saucepan pots were in use. Late in this sequence evidence of extensive bronze foundry activity was discovered (pp. 500-1).

At Old Down Farm, near Andover in Hampshire, a large-scale excavation of a 1.2 ha enclosure revealed a long-lived settlement (Figure 12.1). The earliest occupation began in the eighth century and may have been enclosed, but if so the ditch was almost entirely recut in the next phase dating to the seventh to sixth centuries, when a substantial ditch up to 2 m deep was dug around a settlement nucleus,

leaving only one entrance (without any trace of a gate). Inside was a single substantial house, comparable to the early house at Little Woodbury, together with a scatter of storage pits. By the fifth century the ditch had largely silted but houses and pits still occupied the central area and occupation continued into the Middle Iron Age (fourth to early first centuries) though no houses have been identified. This absence of recognizable houses in the Middle Iron Age need occasion no surprise for it is now clear that in central southern England the normal house type in this period was built of wattlework, most traces of which would have been removed by ploughing, apart from the paired door-posts. Old Down Farm and Houghton Down are of particular interest in that they show that enclosure ditches, and presumably the banks and hedges going with them, were a feature of the Early Iron Age dating back possibly to as early as the seventh century. These early ditched enclosures must therefore have been contemporary with the early palisaded enclosures.

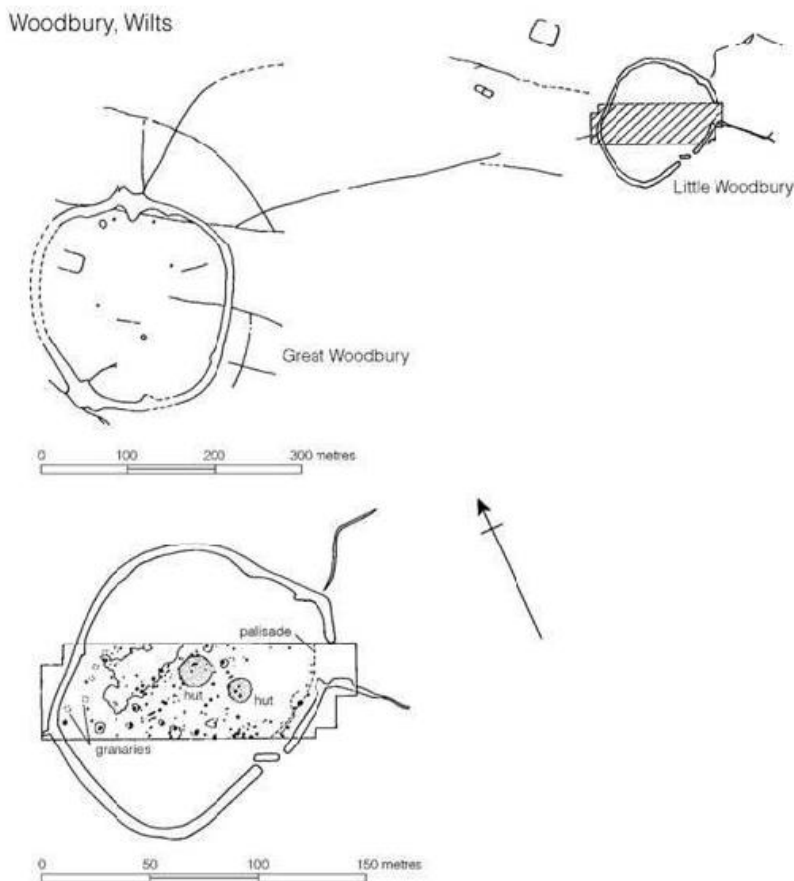


Figure 12.2 Little Woodbury, Wilts. (source: Bersu 1940).

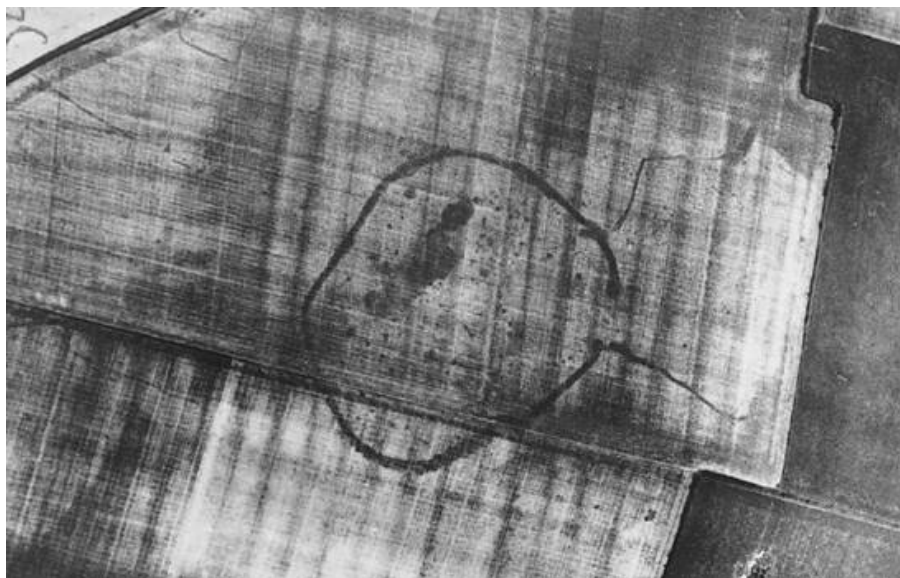


Figure 12.3 *Little Woodbury, Wilts. from the air (Crown Copyright reserved).*

Another site of outstanding interest is the settlement on Winnall Down near Winchester, Hants (Figure 12.1). Here in the sixth to fifth centuries a ditched enclosure comparable in size and shape to Old Down Farm was established on a site which had already been occupied in the Middle-Late Bronze Age. The single entrance was provided with an impressive gate and inside were a number of circular houses, storage pits and two- and four-post structures. Clearly not all were contemporary but several of the houses could have been in use at the same time. By the Middle Iron Age, not only had the ditch become silted but the settlement completely overrode the earlier boundary and was now divided into two distinct zones: a group of circular houses (and one rectangular structure), the majority of which could have been contemporary; and a zone of pits and four-post granaries. Some intercutting between the pits suggests a considerable duration of occupation.

Closely similar enclosures are known at an increasing number of sites recognized on air photographs and from partial excavations, but the few chosen for brief description above present the principal characteristics. Sizes range from about 0.6 ha at Mancombe Down, Wilts., to about 2.5 ha at Farley Mount, Hants, a range which may reflect the status of the individual owner and the size of his holding: some may represent the clustering of several households. This type of settlement was widespread not only on the chalkland of Wessex but

over much of southern Britain and can therefore be regarded as a type-site representing a particular kind of socio-economic structure (Cunliffe 2000, 167-70).

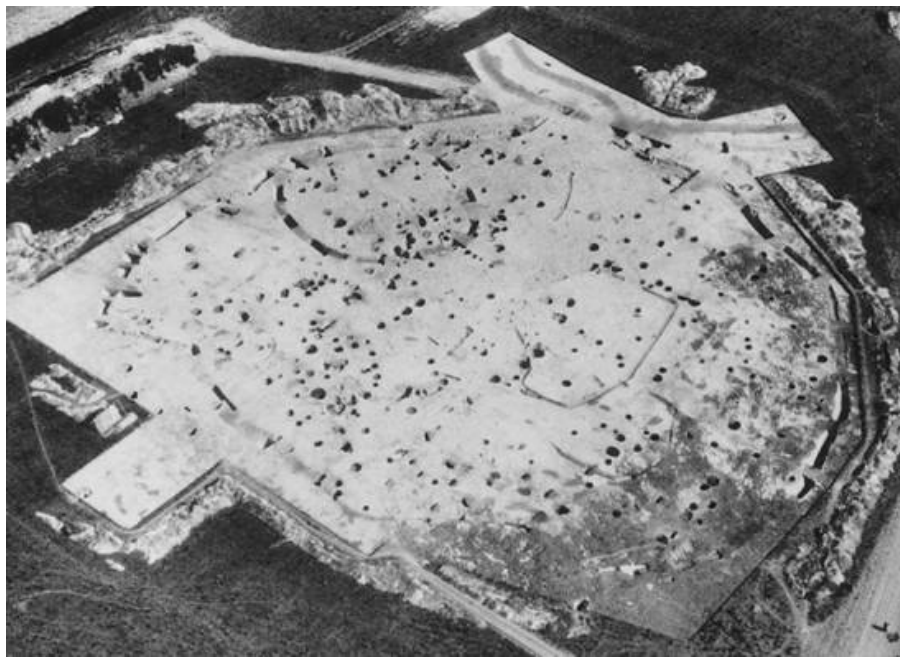


Figure 12.4 *Gussage All Saints, Dorset from the air (photograph: Geoffrey Wainwright).*

The recent series of large-scale excavations have, however, shown something of the complexities of the picture. The actual enclosure, so dominant in the archaeological record, may have been a feature of transitory significance, dug to define a settlement area at one moment and maintained or abandoned as the settlement developed. What does stand out is the fact that once a location had been chosen for settlement, sometimes as early as the eighth to sixth centuries BC, occupation often continued throughout the Iron Age with no recognizable break, implying a remarkable degree of social stability.

‘Banjo’ enclosures (Figures 12.5 and 12.6)

A second type of earthwork-enclosed site, usually about 0.2-0.4 ha in extent, occurs in Wessex, the Cotswolds and sporadically elsewhere (Perry 1966, 1970). Characteristically these sites are provided with a single entrance, to which runs a roadway defined on either side by V-shaped ditches about 1 m deep. Frequently the roadway joins a linear ditch at right angles at a distance of between 45 m and 90 m from the

enclosure. At Blagden Copse, Hants, a limited excavation undertaken at the junction of the road ditches and the linear ditch showed that the two features had been planned in relation to each other and were therefore broadly contemporary.

Preshaw House



Upper Cranbourne



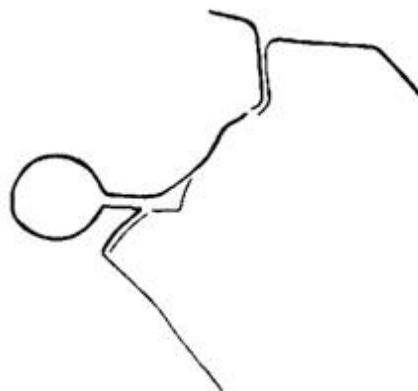
Woodham Farm



South View



Warren Farm



Bramdean

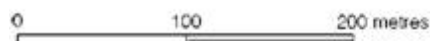


Figure 12.5 'Banjo' enclosures in Hampshire, drawn from air photography (sources: Perry 1966, 1970).

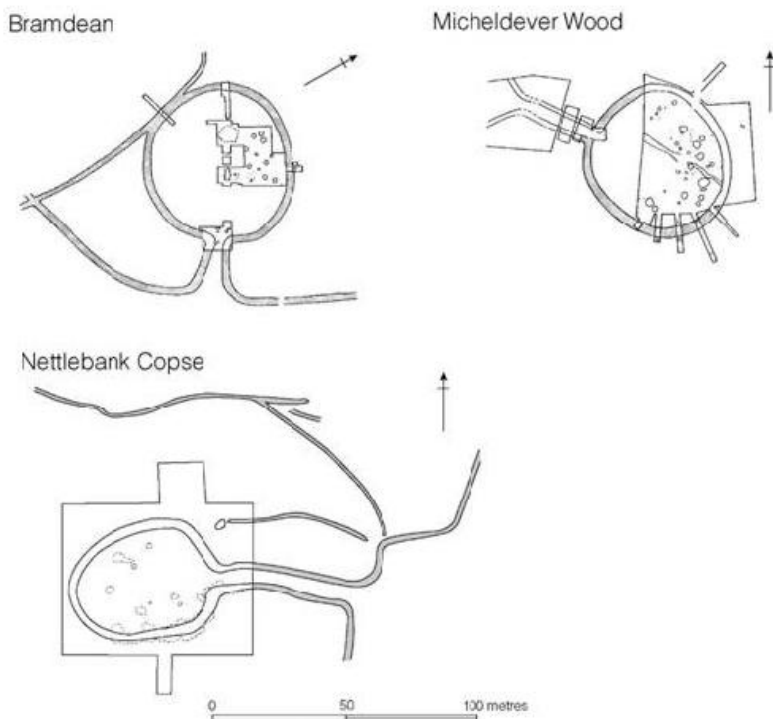


Figure 12.6 Excavated 'banjo' enclosures in Hampshire (sources: Bramdean, Perry 1982, 1986; Micheldever Wood, Fasham 1987; Nettlebank Copse, Cunliffe and Poole 2000e).

Although 'banjos' are usually found separately there are a number of occasions in which two are found in close proximity, and some where two are actually conjoined by linear earthworks implying contemporaneity. Such sites are referred to as 'spectacle' sites. Overall the planning and setting of banjo enclosures strongly suggest that they were designed, at least in part, to aid the collection, selection and temporary corralling of livestock.

Four Hampshire 'banjo' enclosures have been excavated, Bramdean, Micheldever Wood and Owslebury in part, and Nettlebank Copse in total. Evidence of function is ambiguous. At Nettlebank Copse the enclosing ditch was dug at the beginning of the Middle Iron Age to surround the site of a small abandoned farmstead. There is no evidence of any domestic structures inside contemporary with it, but in the first century BC, after the ditch had been partially cleared out for the last time, occupation debris was dumped into it on a number of

occasions. The absence of internal structures and the nature of the deposits of debris are best explained by suggesting that the enclosure may have had a ritual function associated with the annual round-up of livestock accompanied by bouts of communal feasting. At Micheldever Wood, which was two-thirds excavated, the central area was kept clear but storage pits seem to have been arranged around the periphery and much the same pattern was noted at Bramdean. If the storage pits are contemporary with the enclosure ditches at Bramdean and Micheldever Wood then they must differ functionally from Nettlebank Copse, but the possibility remains that the pits relate to an earlier phase of occupation. At any event the small size of the enclosures, 40-50 m across, the long corridor approach and the long linear ditches which open out from the corridor strongly suggest a use which involves the rounding up of livestock. There would be nothing incongruous in supposing that some of the banjos may also have been occupied, though perhaps on a temporary basis.

Chronologically the banjos belong to the Middle and Late Iron Age and are thus a late addition to the landscape, occupying areas between the larger settlements already established in the earlier centuries of the Iron Age. Many of them would appear to occupy more marginal areas, which would be consistent with a use in animal husbandry.

Open settlements

Enclosed settlements of Little Woodbury and banjo type have received considerable attention from archaeologists largely because they are evident from the air as major landscape features, though they may be almost invisible from the ground. Two excavations of enclosures have, however, accidentally focused on a different problem - that of the unenclosed settlement. One of these, Winnall Down, has already been referred to (p. 243). Here a considerable Middle Iron Age settlement developed with little reference to an earlier enclosed settlement. The second site is Boscombe Down West, Wilts., where occupation of Early and Middle Iron Age date extended over 6.5 ha: the site was only recognized because a double-ditched enclosure had been constructed in the first century AD. In fact unenclosed settlements of considerable size are not at all uncommon. In the ninth to seventh centuries All Cannings Cross and Potterne, Wilts., are two well-known examples while in the sixth and fifth centuries we may cite Boscombe Down West, Wilts., Slonk Hill, Sussex, and the unenclosed phase of Bishopstone, Sussex. Boscombe Down West continued in use into the Middle Iron Age, at which time, as we have seen, the Winnall settlement outgrew its enclosure. These seven sites spanning the Iron Age are probably only the tip of the iceberg and provide a salutary reminder of the potential complexity of the

settlement pattern.

Potterne and probably All Cannings Cross, together with East Chisenbury, Wilts., belong to a distinct type of open settlement characterized by the massive build-up of midden material composed of domestic rubbish and animal waste. The Potterne midden covered an area of 3.5 ha and survives to a depth of 2 m while the East Chisenbury midden is up to 3 m deep though less extensive at some 2.5 ha. In neither case has it been possible to establish the exact context of the midden but the East Chisenbury deposit is thought to lie largely within, but overlapping, the bank and ditch of a large enclosure. A meticulous examination of a sample of the Potterne midden showed it to have accumulated over a period of some 500 years, from 1100-600 BC, as the result of penning livestock and adding domestic rubbish to the animal waste and bedding material. At the All Cannings Cross site the nature of the midden was not closely observed, but pits, post-holes and ovens were found cut into the underlying subsoil although many of these may post-date the original midden. Several other middens of broadly similar type have been identified in Wiltshire. Most seem to have begun by the ninth century and to have continued to accumulate throughout the Early All Cannings Cross phase to the beginning of the sixth century BC. The question of their economic role will be considered again later (pp. 424-5).

Ditched enclosures of the first century BC and first century AD (Figure 12.7)

The tradition of surrounding farmsteads with a simple enclosing ditch was maintained in some areas of the south, notably Dorset, into the first century AD. The classic example of such a settlement is Tollard Royal in Cranborne Chase, Wilts., where total excavation has exposed the complete ground plan of the farm (Figures 12.8 and 12.9), consisting of a kite-shaped ditched enclosure of about 0.5 ha in extent, provided with a single entrance. Inside were found a single hut, thirty-five storage pits of varying capacity and three or four granaries. One of the most impressive features of the plan is the large open area within the enclosure, where presumably flocks and herds could have been temporarily corralled. The basic plan, clearly a direct continuation of the traditional Little Woodbury type, is further reflected in the neighbouring settlements of Rotherley and Woodcuts, which continued in use little changed well into the Roman period, and in the latest phase at Gussage All Saints and Old Down Farm (Figure 12.4).

A rather more extensive type of settlement, found sporadically in the south, is represented by the Wessex examples of Worthy Down and

Owslebury, Hants, and Casterley Camp, Wilts. (Figure 12.7). All three sites are characterized by a complex series of ditches which define enclosures of varying sizes and shapes, some used for habitation, some (e.g. at Owslebury) for burial, others presumably for livestock. The plan of Casterley Camp is particularly informative for here it is possible to recognize the careful placing of entrances so as to allow maximum inter-use of enclosures. Such an arrangement would have been of value at those times during the year when flocks and herds needed to be brought together and sorted for culling, castrating or redistribution. The development of these complex ditched enclosures as an adjunct to settlements suggests the increased importance of stock rearing - a matter which will be returned to again later (p. 429).

Multiple ditch systems and enclosures

In parts of Wessex, particularly on the downland ridge between the rivers Wylfe and Nadder, complex systems of ditches, sometimes multiple, are found associated with enclosures, often of banjo type. The best-known examples include Hanging Langford Camp, Hamshill Ditches, Ebsbury and Stockton Earthworks in Wiltshire and Gussage Hill in Dorset (Corney 1989). Where evidence is available these complexes seem to have flourished in the Late Iron Age, but may have begun earlier, and to have continued into the Roman period. They clearly represent a concentration of social effort and may therefore be communal foci of some kind, perhaps meeting places or even village settlements.

Worthy Down



Rotherley



Old Down Farm



Tollard Royal



Casterley Camp



Gussage All Saints



0 500 metres

Figure 12.7 Ditched enclosures of the Late Iron Age (source: Cunliffe 1984c based on various sources).

Tollard Royal, Dorset

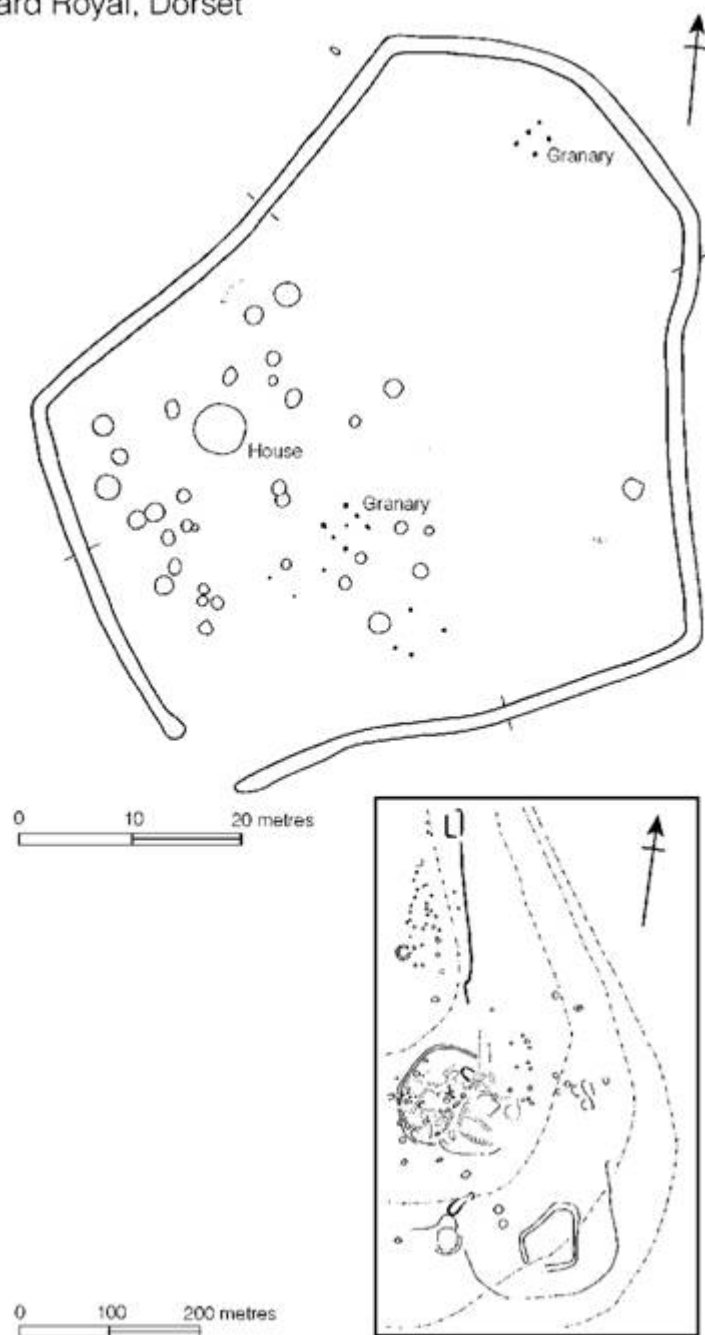


Figure 12.8 Tollard Royal, Dorset (source: Wainwright 1968).



Figure 12.9 Tollard Royal, Dorset enclosure from the air (photograph: Dr J.K.S. St Joseph. Crown Copyright reserved).

Settlement size, status and siting

Many of the sites described above were single farming units. Little Woodbury, whatever its social implications, probably had only one centrally placed house in use at any one time (although the possibility remains that other contemporary huts may have been placed around the periphery of the enclosure). With its fine early house, 1.6 ha farmyard and considerable grain-storing capacity, it must have been the homestead of a wealthy man and his family. A short distance from the excavated site lay a far more substantial ditched enclosure, known as Great Woodbury ([Figure 12.2](#)), covering an area of about 4 ha and enclosed by a massive ditch of hillfort proportions some 6 m wide and 3.6 m deep. A single section through the ditch revealed pottery of saucepan pot type in the primary silting. While it would clearly be wrong to base too much on this limited evidence, it could well be argued that Great Woodbury replaced Little Woodbury. Certainly the relatively small percentage of saucepan pot wares from Little Woodbury would suggest that it ceased to be occupied fairly early in the period during which these types were commonly in use; moreover, it is hardly likely that the two sites were occupied at the same time.

By virtue of its non-defensive siting, Great Woodbury can hardly be regarded as a hillfort, but it may well represent a stage in the social development of the owning family, moving from the old site to the new when wealth had increased sufficiently to allow a new building programme to be undertaken. If these speculations are correct, there is no need to suppose that the actual size of the homestead community had increased; a larger area enclosed and a more massive ditch need be nothing more than status symbols. Massive enclosures for apparently single homesteads are known elsewhere as, for example, at Pimperne Down, where the large house was retained within a 4.7 ha enclosure. Thus size of enclosure does not necessarily reflect size of community: in many cases it may be dependent upon the status of the occupants.

A further indication of status is provided by artefacts which can be associated with aristocratic behaviour. At Gussage a bronze-smith was at work making a large number of horse-harness and chariot-fittings, presumably under the auspices of the owner. The product of this one craftsman would have been sufficient to deck out a considerable number of chariot teams, surely in excess of the needs of the particular community. It is possible, of course, that they were produced under the patronage of the owner who could then have used them as gifts to dependants, thus establishing or maintaining his superior status. The question is an intriguing but insoluble one. Articles of horse/chariot equipment occur sporadically on other enclosure sites, like the pair of linchpins from Old Down Farm, suggesting that enclosed settlements of this kind may have been of 'aristocratic' status. The relationship of these to the open settlements and banjos is impossible to define and the whole question is bound up with the function of the contemporary hillforts.

The principal difference between the settlements discussed here and hillforts is one of siting. Hillforts were always placed in defensive positions, usually on hill-tops or ridge-ends with good visibility and control of the main approaches: they were also, themselves, highly visible. Settlement sites, on the other hand, were chosen to be close to the arable land. Even the massive ditch of Great Woodbury cannot disguise the fact that the site has little tactical significance. The close relationship between settlement and arable land is demonstrated on a number of sites, but the Farley Mount enclosure in Hampshire is perhaps one of the more dramatic, showing many hectares of rectangular 'Celtic' fields spreading out regularly from the boundaries of the settlement. It is tempting here to think of both fields and settlement being laid out at the same time to colonize a piece of virgin downland.

It is difficult to generalize about the overall pattern of rural

settlement but several regional surveys have now been published (Cunliffe 2000, 197-203). On the South Downs, in the area of Chalton, Hants, a detailed field study has shown a remarkable density of occupation sites, many of them sited by choice on the shoulders of east-facing slopes, linked to each other and to their fields by a network of trackways. In an area of 5 square km eleven settlements are known, some less than 0.5 km from their neighbours (Cunliffe 1974, figure 4). Such a density is not universal even on the chalk, for in a comparable survey of the Marlborough Downs based on the parishes of West Overton and Fyfield, only three settlements were found in a block of 12.9 square km, the average distance between them being 1.6 km.

An exhaustive survey of the evidence gleaned from aerial photography covering the area from the Test to the Bourne has provided a glimpse of the real complexity of the settlement evidence (Palmer 1984) but two well-defined patterns stand out (Cunliffe 1984a, [figure 10.2](#)). Around the hillfort of Quarley Hill the settlements cluster on a circumference about 1.5 km from the fort and at intervals of 1 km from each other, while to the south of Danebury strings of settlements line the flanks of the river Test and the Wallop Brook, spaced at intervals of about 1 km and sited at about the same distance from the valley bottoms. This latter group looks very much like a total pattern, with the landscape filled with farming units optimally sited to exploit the range of available resources. The Quarley grouping on the other hand, while packed at the same density, controlled a more limited range of resources in the immediate neighbourhoods. Most significantly the individual sites lacked easy access to well-watered meadow. Thus, either their subsistence regimes differed radically from those of the Danebury group or else the meadow environment was available to them through some mechanism which involved limited transhumance.

None of the figures given above can be regarded as of statistical value since the recognition of a site is conditioned by a number of chance factors, and however much the chances of discovery are increased by intensive fieldwork, as in the case of the examples quoted, without excavation there can be no assurance that all the sites were in use at the same time, nor is it possible to compare the sizes of individual settlements. That said it is now tolerably clear that on favoured land, like the chalk downs, substantial farms were closely spaced.

The Cotswolds and the Upper Thames valley

The Upper Thames valley is one of the most systematically explored

Iron Age landscapes in Britain thanks almost entirely to the work of the Oxford Archaeological Unit initiated in 1973, now Oxford Archaeology (Hingley and Miles 1984; Miles 1998). The complexity of the landscape was first demonstrated as the result of a systematic survey of the air photographic cover (Benson and Miles 1974), since when a carefully controlled programme of large-scale excavation has been in operation. It is now possible to stand back from the detail to see a clear pattern emerge (Figure 12.10).

Three distinct geographical zones can be defined - the Cotswold flanks, the gravel terraces and the river flood plain - and each has its own type of settlement. On the Cotswold dip slope, cut by the tributaries of the Thames, small enclosed settlements prevail. In plan at least, these have much in common with the banjo enclosures of the Wessex chalk (Darvill and Hingley 1982) but excavation has been minimal and there is little yet to say of them. Hingley (1984b) has, however, suggested that they represent individual farms each with their own distinct territories. The excavation of part of a ditched enclosure of Middle Iron Age date at Guiting Power, Glos., in the heart of the Cotswolds, gives some idea of what can be expected: the dense scatter of pits and post-holes is not unlike a typical Wessex enclosed settlement. Rescue excavation during road schemes has produced further comparable evidence. Near Birdlip, Glos., rectilinear ditched enclosures of the Middle-Late Iron Age were discovered associated with large numbers of storage pits. One of the enclosures contained a large circular building. It is now at last possible to begin to characterize the nature of settlement spreading along the Cotswold ridge (Parry 1999, 52-7). To the south of the Thames, 5 km north of Swindon, at Groundwell Farm, a ditched enclosure, superficially of banjo form, was examined (Figure 12.11). The pottery, which is closely similar to that of the Upper Thames basin, suggests that occupation began in the fifth century and continued to the third century or later, during which time a succession of houses were built, together with post-built storage structures. We are clearly dealing here with a single family unit, practising mixed agriculture, occupying the same site for many generations. Groundwell Farm may well be typical of the enclosed settlements of the upland areas and provides a salutary warning that the superficial resemblance in plan to the banjo enclosures of Wessex should not be taken to imply a similarity of socio-economic function.

In contrast to the hill sites, the settlements of the gravel terraces are far better known from a series of large-scale excavations. On present evidence it seems that two different social units can be recognized. On the first gravel terrace the settlements are of extended family or hamlet type. Examples of the first include Watkins Farm, Northmoor,

and Mingies Ditch ([Figure 12.11](#)). At Watkins Farm a settlement was established on a dry hillock of gravel some time in the Middle Iron Age. It consisted of no more than two contemporary houses and ancillary storage structures, which were rebuilt on at least five occasions, enclosed within a double-ditched system with external antennae ditches. The two enclosing ditches were probably designed to provide corral space between for animals. Environmental studies have suggested that the settlement was set in a landscape predominantly of grassland. Mingies Ditch is clearly a settlement of family or extended family size, though whether the enclosure formed the sole residence of the family or was only occupied seasonally is unclear. Watkins Farm was comparable in extent and complexity, and remained in use throughout the Middle and Late Iron Age.

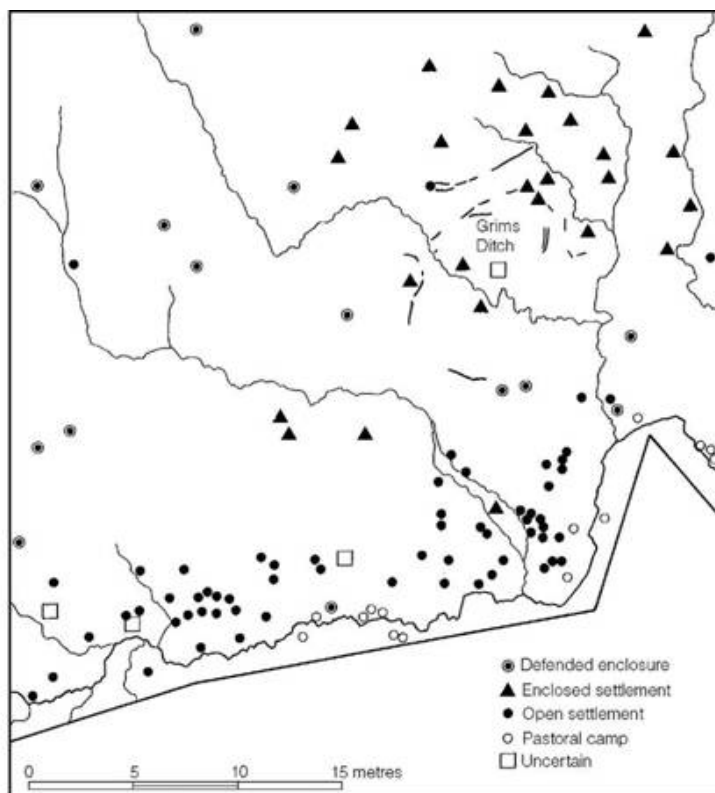
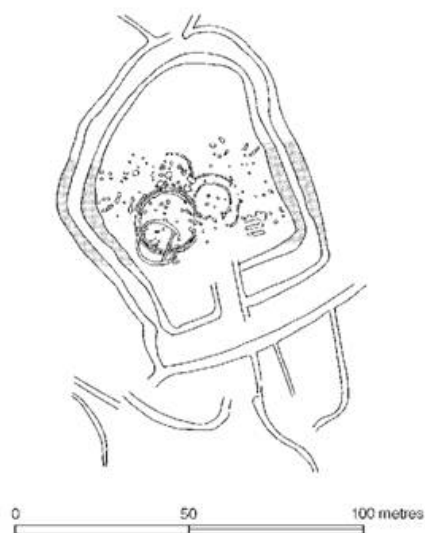


Figure 12.10 Settlement distribution in the Upper Thames valley (source: Hingley and Miles 1984).

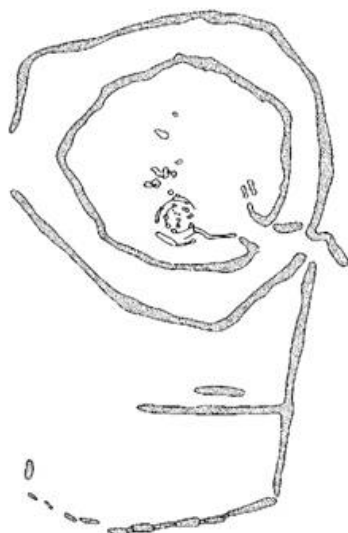
A more complicated pattern is presented by the Middle Iron Age settlement at Claydon Pike, near Lechlade ([Figures 12.11](#) and [12.12](#)). Here three distinct gravel rises, separated by wetland, were in

occupation, each producing evidence of a complex sequence of houses. In the case of the western 'island', where the sequence could be worked out in detail, it is clear that only two or three houses were in contemporary use. Thus each 'island' was probably the homestead of a single family. If all three were in occupation at one time then the settlement is best regarded as a hamlet.

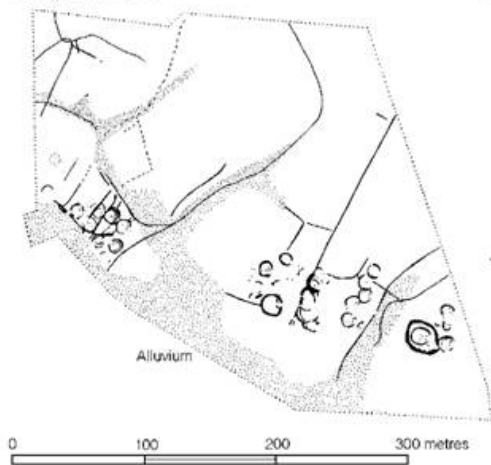
Groundwell Farm



Mingies Ditch



Claydon Pike



Farmoor

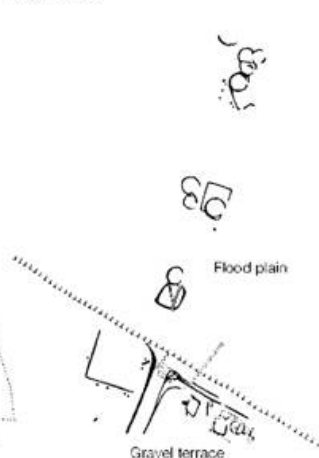


Figure 12.11 Settlements in the Upper Thames valley (sources: Groundwell Farm, Gingell 1982; Mingies Ditch, Allen and Robinson 1979; Claydon Pike, Miles and Palmer 1982; Farmoor, Lambrick and Robinson 1979).



Figure 12.12 Claydon Pike, Lechlade, Glos. View of Middle Iron Age roundhouse sites on an 'island' of gravel bounded by drainage ditches (photograph: Oxford Archaeological Unit).

The second gravel terrace is dominated by a different type of settlement typified by those excavated at Ashville and Gravelly Guy (Figure 12.13). Both cover many hectares, within which a distinct zoning is apparent, with the settlement and pit storage areas kept quite separate throughout much of the life of the settlement. This type of arrangement is well known at a number of second terrace sites (Hingley and Miles 1984, 62-3) and the very considerable grain storage capacity which they exhibit may suggest that sites of this kind performed centralized storage and redistribution functions for the larger community.

Finally, a number of sites are known on the flood plain itself: of these Farmoor provides a well-excavated example (Figure 12.11). Here three separate groups of houses and attached enclosures were discovered spaced at intervals of about 50 m across the meadow. Each was sufficient to house a single family, but since all flood plain sites

would have been under water for much of the winter they presumably represent summer steadings providing shelter for the family, or that part of it, who came to the meadows with the flocks and herds. During the winter months they and their stock would have rejoined the rest of the community at the larger settlements on the first or second terrace.



Figure 12.13 *Gravelly Guy, Stanton Harcourt, Oxon. Middle Iron Age farm with over 600 storage pits. The rectilinear enclosures are Roman (photograph: Oxford Archaeological Unit).*

From what has been said above it is tempting to see the complex of valley settlements on the gravel terraces and flood plain as part of a single socio-economic system operating a subsistence strategy based on the exploitation of a number of discrete ecological zones. Such a system would have required co-operation which would have encouraged the growth of larger settlement agglomerations. The limestone hill sites, on the other hand, could well have been self-contained units exploiting the range of rich soils in their hinterlands. Thus two entirely different social systems may have emerged in the region by the Middle Iron Age (Hingley 1984b).

Viewed against the perspective of time, the Middle Iron Age seems to have been a period of population expansion, colonization and consolidation. From the beginning of the first century BC onwards further changes can be detected: a more organized landscape now develops, with trackways and rectangular paddocks laid out, sometimes impinging upon earlier, more scattered, settlements (Hingley and Miles 1984, 65). This is particularly apparent at Claydon

Pike where a large new settlement complex replaced the Middle Iron Age homesteads. As part of this pattern of change a new type of settlement appears, typified by Barton Court Farm where a farm, enclosed in a rectangular ditched enclosure, was established at the beginning of a sequence which led eventually to the development of a small Roman villa. The details of these changes are still rather ill-focused but the evidence is consistent with a continuing population rise and the emergence of a more integrated trading network, occasioned by the increased demands of the Roman world, in the century or so before the conquest.

The Severn–Avon valleys and the west Midlands

Our detailed knowledge of the settlements of the Upper Thames valley is based on a tradition of intensive fieldwork and excavation. Had equivalent effort been put into the archaeology of the Avon valley, to the west of the scarp slope of the Cotswolds, it is not at all unlikely that a similar pattern would have emerged. As it is we have only glimpses of the richness of the data through surveys (Webster and Hobley 1965; Oswald 1969; Hingley 1989), through the large-scale excavations at Barford and Beckford, Warks., and from a number of other sites, sampled mostly during rescue excavations, which are gradually filling out the picture (Ray 2001; Palmer 2001).

At Beckford, close to Bredon Hill Camp, a sufficient area has been examined to show that the settlement was extensive and consisted of a series of large ditched enclosures which had been refurbished on a number of occasions. Within each enclosure, settlement structures consisting of smaller ditched enclosures, circular huts with drip gullies around them, four-post ‘granaries’, cobbled yards and storage pits were found in abundance, together with artefacts representing all the normal farmyard activities, as well as bronze casting. The extensive nature of the remains would suggest that the Beckford settlement was a village of some size: it is possible that each of the large enclosures represented the holding of a single family unit. The complex has similarities to those found on the second terrace of the Upper Thames but how it fitted into the regional system of the Avon is at present ill-defined and will remain so until more sites are excavated in the general vicinity.

Park Farm, Barford, Warks., sited on a gravel terrace of the Avon, is an example of a more contained settlement of single family size. It comprised a rectangular enclosure containing two circular houses and a penannular drainage gully defining an open area thought possibly to

be an animal pen. The enclosure was set out in relation to a linear boundary ditch of probable Late Bronze Age date, the existence of which was evidently still remembered in the Middle Iron Age when the enclosure ditch was dug. Occupation appears to have been fairly short-lived. Park Farm is only one element in a highly complex pattern of settlement and land use which can be traced all along the course of the Avon hereabouts. Aerial photography and fieldwork have shown that each micro-region defined by a loop of the river contains a settlement complex, the most easily identifiable features of which are rectangular ditched enclosures comparable to Park Farm (Crackwell and Hingley 1994, figure 1). The implication is of a densely settled river valley.

Hingley's detailed survey of the evidence from central and southern Warwickshire (1989, 1996) offers the first serious attempt to consider the available evidence in terms of regional systems. Its potential is considerable, but without a concerted input of carefully designed excavations, of the kind mounted in the Upper Thames valley, few significant advances in understanding will be possible. That said, regional differences and similarities are beginning to appear. The clearest aspect is that the settlement pattern in the Avon valley, with its banked and ditched enclosures representing individual farmsteads, is more comparable to that of the Ouse and Nene valleys than to the Upper Thames where open settlements are more common.

The Severn estuary region presents a very different landscape and a range of varied resource potentials, of which the most extensive are the alluvial tracts flanking the estuary (Rippon 1997). Work at Goldcliff on the Gwent Levels has recovered a number of rectangular timber structures and a trackway built within a zone of freshwater peat land subject to periodic flooding. The function of the structures is unclear but they may be stock pens reflecting seasonal grazing regimes. On the eastern side of the estuary - the area of the Avonmouth and Gloucestershire Levels - two settlements have been examined, at Hallen and Northwick, Avon. Both are of Middle Iron Age date but were short-lived and seasonally occupied, presumably to exploit the rich summer grazing which the levels had to offer (Gardener *et al.* 2002). The evidence, therefore, would seem to suggest that the settlements on the levels were part of a system of transhumance which would have involved one segment of the population leaving the upland settlements to tend the flocks and herds on their summer pastures flanking the estuary.

The west Midlands

The triangle of country west of the Avon-Soar-Trent, east of the

Severn-Dee and south of the Pennines is composed of vast tracts of Keuper marl, Triassic sandstones and coal-measure shales, highly unconducive to pre-Roman Iron Age settlement. Apart from the river gravels and the more fertile sandstone and limestone hills, much of the area appears, on present evidence, to have been largely unsettled.

Of the few hillforts known in the area the only site to have been excavated in any detail is Breedon-on-the-Hill, Leics., sited on a hill of magnesian limestone overlooking the valleys of the Soar and Trent. No internal buildings were recognized, but occupation appears to have been extensive. Pits, possibly for storage, and a number of quernstones suggest that grain production was widely practised. The quantity of animal bones recovered was not large but cattle were numerically more common than sheep (50 per cent compared with 36 per cent of all animal bone), underlining the importance of the pastures along the Soar valley. The use of sheep as wool producers is, however, reflected in the discovery of a weaving comb.

Largely as the result of extensive programmes of aerial photography it is now known that the river gravels of the west Midlands were as densely occupied as those of the south and east Midlands. One of the most comprehensively studied regions is the valley of the Tame (Smith 1977, 1978a) but only at Fisherwick has excavation on a reasonable scale been carried out and published. Here a Middle Iron Age enclosure of some 0.25 ha, containing evidence of at least two circular houses, was partially examined. The enclosure was part of an organized landscape, divided by drainage ditches, which included several other enclosures. Environmental evidence suggests that the fields in the immediate neighbourhood may have served largely for stock rearing but there is ample evidence of cereal production from occupation levels associated with the settlement.

The east Midlands, the fen edge and East Anglia

Until the mid-1960s the Midland river valleys and the Jurassic limestones and clays were largely devoid of recorded Iron Age settlements, with the exception of the regions in the immediate vicinity of Oxford (OS 1962). Intensified aerial survey combined with a number of excavations in advance of gravel and ironstone extraction and building programmes, together with a tradition of high-quality fieldwork, however, has totally altered the picture. Far from being sparsely occupied the Midlands can now be shown to have been exceptionally densely populated (Hall and Hutchings 1972; Knight 1984; Pryor 1984, 230-40). Moreover it has become clear that, during

the Iron Age, communities had begun to spread from the lighter soils of the limestone and gravel on to clay land which had previously been thought to be totally unsuitable for prehistoric settlement. A number of regional overviews usefully bring together the scattered evidence for Leicestershire (Liddell 1982; Clay 2001), Bedfordshire (Dyer 1996a), East Anglia (Davies and Williamson 1999) and the Fen region (Hall and Coles 1994).

One of the most thoroughly studied regions is Northamptonshire. Many settlements have now been partially or extensively excavated. Of these Twywell, situated on the limestone uplands of Northamptonshire, provides an example of a complex habitation site dating to the period from approximately the fourth to the second century (Figure 12.14). The site consisted of a number of ditched enclosures of which one, only 0.1 ha in area, was totally excavated. Its development was complex, the ditch, averaging 3.7 m wide and 1.22 m deep, having been recut on several occasions. Evidence of structures, in the form of pits, post-holes and drainage gullies, was not restricted to the enclosed area, but spread densely outside; indeed it would appear that the huts had been sited so as to line the approach road leading to the enclosure entrance, but contemporaneity was difficult to prove. The evidence of Twywell therefore shows that ditched enclosures form only one element in otherwise more extensive settlement complexes. It may be compared to the contemporary sites of Abingdon and Beckford.

A number of discrete enclosures, unencumbered by neighbouring structures, are known. At Blackthorn, Northants, a double-ditched enclosure of about 0.1 ha, dating to the second or first century BC, was found to contain a single house together with twenty-eight pits, some of which could well have been for grain storage. Three kilometres away at Moulton Park a contemporary, but larger, enclosure was found to protect several houses. Here, however, occupation continued into the first century AD as the settlement spread away from its original nucleus. Other Northamptonshire rectangular enclosures excavated on a large scale include Wootton Farm and Grendon Quarry. Clearly this type of settlement unit is widespread in the region. A rather different settlement type is presented by the excavations at Draughton and Brigstock, Northants (Figure 12.14). At Draughton, a ditched enclosure 30 m across was found enclosing three houses, not necessarily contemporary, ranging in diameter from 5.8 to 10.4 m, the largest presumably being the principal house. A similar settlement was excavated at Brigstock, where the enclosure was 22 m in internal diameter, and protected a single house 7.8 m in diameter set in a penannular drainage ditch and with a stone-built pathway leading from its door to the enclosure

entrance. The enclosure excavated at Brigstock is only one element of a complex settlement pattern revealed by air photography. The selection of single houses (or homesteads) for enclosure in this monumental way can only reasonably be explained in terms of the exceptional status of the owners.

Further south, in the valleys of the Ouse and Cam and adjacent areas, a large number of rescue excavations, mostly partial, are now beginning to add detail to the settlement pattern, showing yet again that, from the Middle Iron Age, settlement seems to have been expanding. Complex ditched enclosures reflecting use over a period of time have been examined at Norse Road, Bedford, Flitwick, Beds., and Edix Hill, Barrington, Cambs., but the limited scale of the excavations at present limits useful generalizations. A more unusual type of site is represented by the circular ditched enclosure of Arbury Camp, Cambs., which covers some 5 ha and is comparable in form and size to hillforts, differing only in its location on a low-lying gravel terrace. Limited sampling inside failed to identify any significant trace of occupation. It is tempting to believe that such an unusual structure served as a focal point for an extensive social territory.

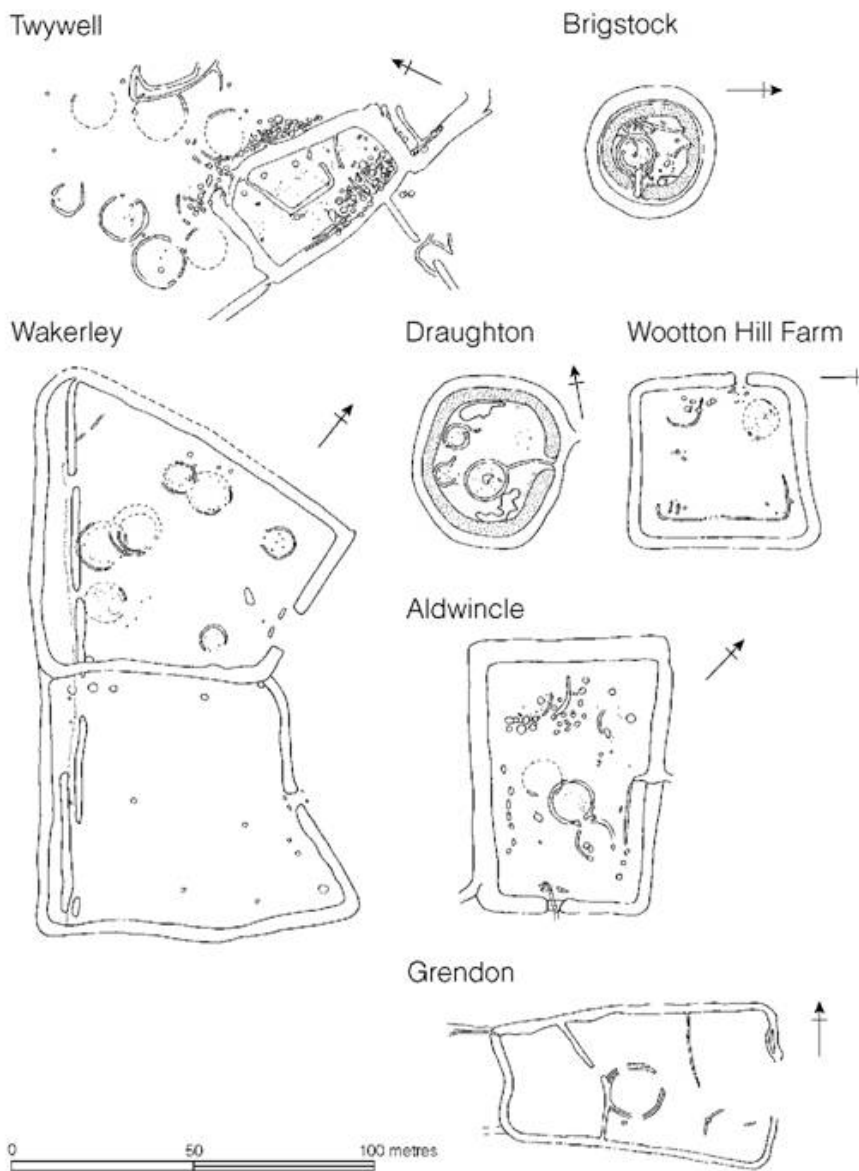


Figure 12.14 Settlements in the east Midlands (sources: Twywell, Jackson 1975; Brigstock, Jackson 1983; Wakerley, Jackson 1978; Draughton, Grimes 1961; Aldwincle, Jackson 1977; Grendon, Jackson 1996;

Throughout the east Midlands the tradition of enclosing the principal settlement area with a ditch and presumably a bank continued into the late first century BC and early first century AD. An example of this later type of settlement is provided by Colsterworth, Lincs. (Figure 12.15), which consisted of a ditched enclosure

measuring 73 by 64 m, containing two clusters of huts of varying dates, the largest being some 13.4 m in diameter. At the broadly contemporary site at Tallington, in the Welland valley, a rectangular ditched enclosure 65.5 by 48.8 m lying alongside a trackway was totally excavated, revealing most of the structures appropriate to a farming community with the exception of the house (quarried away?), and grain storage pits which would have been impossible to construct in the wet gravelly soil; grain must therefore have been stored in above-ground containers. An enclosure of the same date and closely similar size, excavated at Orton Longueville, Northants, provides interesting evidence for the continuity of socio-economic units of this size well into the Roman period.

Not all of the Late Iron Age settlements in the east Midlands were simple ditched enclosures: more complex forms developed and many can now be recognized as the result of aerial photography. The later stages of the settlement at Moulton Park, Northants, and the partially excavated site at Hardingstone, Northants, clearly belong to this category as do several of the settlements examined in Bedfordshire. The evidence at present available would therefore suggest that here, as in the south, simple and complex ditched enclosures continued to be constructed side by side up to the time of the Roman Conquest.

In general terms, it can be said that in the east Midlands enclosures, usually but not invariably representing single family units, formed a recurring element in the settlement pattern from at least as early as the fourth century BC to the Roman Conquest and later. Where the subsoil was suitable storage pits were dug, but elsewhere, on the gravels and on the clay land, grain must have been stored above ground. On present evidence it would seem that the enclosed settlements of the Midlands were significantly smaller than the broadly contemporary Wessex sites of Little Woodbury type but are comparable to those of the west Midlands and East Anglia. This might suggest that the Little Woodbury type of settlement reflects a particular socio-economic system restricted to central southern Britain in the Early and Middle Iron Age. How the systems varied is a matter for further detailed investigation.

We have already seen that on the Wessex chalkland and in the Upper Thames valley large unenclosed settlements were not infrequent. These, it has been suggested, may represent large agglomerations of people living together in hamlets or villages. Evidence from Northamptonshire suggests that here too substantial unenclosed settlements are to be found. The spread of occupation at Twywell has already been mentioned and at Wakerley, Northants, ironstone quarrying has exposed a settlement in excess of 500 m in length, but given the absence of total excavation and bearing in mind

the difficulties of assessing what is contemporary in such palimpsests (Knight 1984, 227-38) it would be rash to talk of villages rather than groupings of two or three family units.

In Lincolnshire a number of settlements grew to quite considerable proportions. Best known is Dragonby where the settlement of houses set in a complex of ditched enclosures eventually reached 8 ha in extent. Old Sleaford was of comparable complexity but its Iron Age extent is undefined. Both settlements were flourishing in the Late Iron Age, by which time they may have acquired many of the functions appropriate to urban settlement. Large settlement complexes of this kind are a feature of the Jurassic Zone of Lincolnshire in the Late Iron Age (May 1984).

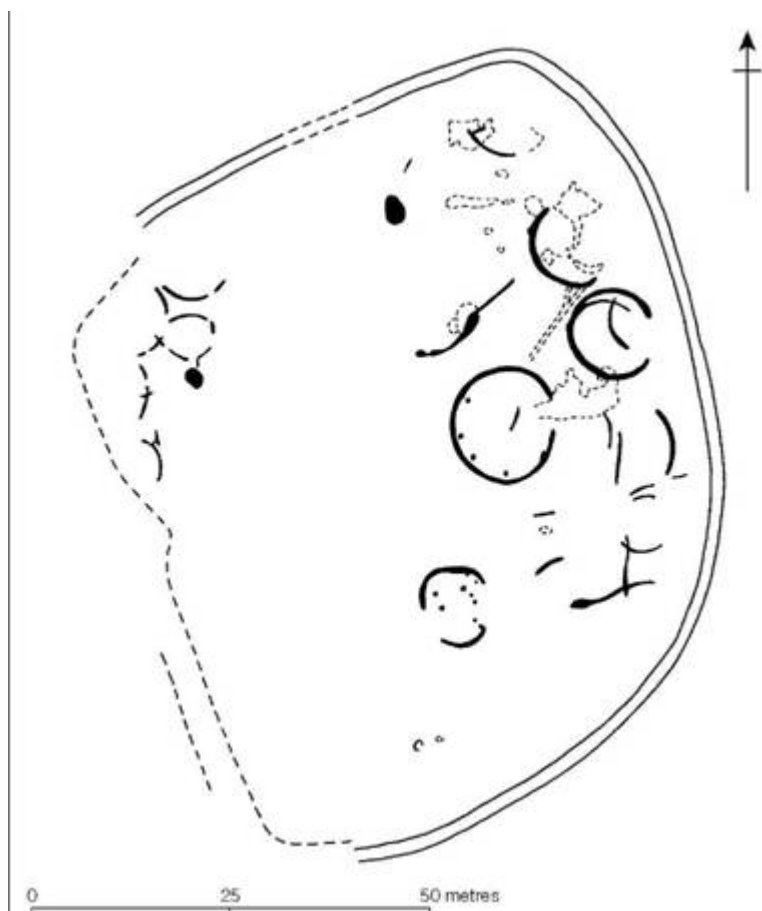


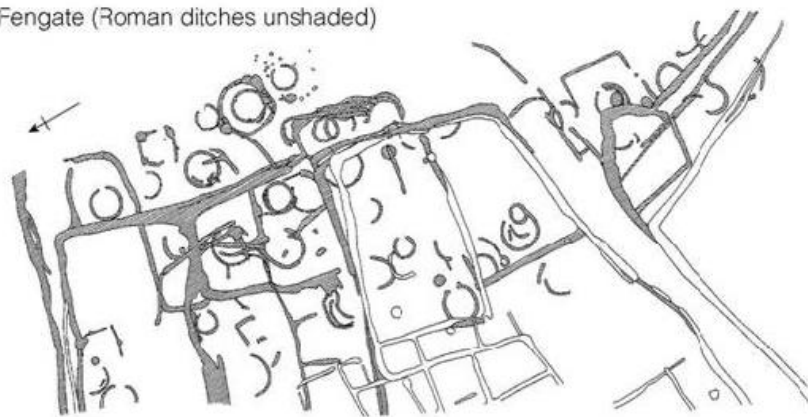
Figure 12.15 Colsterworth, Lines. (source: Grimes 1961).

Within the east Midlands lies a rather specialized environment – the long sinuous fen edge where the dry land of Lincolnshire,

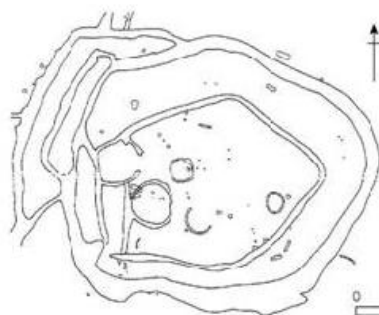
Cambridgeshire and Norfolk met the vast expanse of waterlogged fen that fringed what is now the Wash, into which the rivers Ouse, Nene, Welland and Witham drain. The Fens have recently been studied in campaigns of systematic fieldwork, with the result that much has been learnt of the environmental changes to which the region has been subjected (Waller 1988; Hall and Coles 1994) and the settlement patterns of successive periods including the Iron Age are now becoming much more clearly focused (Simmons 1980; Hall 1981, 1987; Lane 1988). Large-scale excavations of fen-edge settlements of Iron Age date are at present few but four sites of outstanding interest show something of the complexity of the problem: Fengate, Northants, Upper Delphs, Haddenham, Wardy Hill, Coveney, Cambs., and Tattershall Thorpe, Lincs.

Fengate is a complex open settlement of considerable extent comprising a series of ditched enclosures or paddocks associated with at least eighteen circular houses, a few pits and isolated post-holes (Figure 12.16). The size and longevity of the settlement, which was occupied throughout much of the Iron Age, suggests a stable economic system based, presumably, upon the exploitation of the clay and limestones of the dry land to the west and the varied resources of the fen to the east.

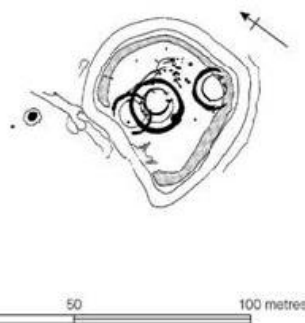
Fengate (Roman ditches unshaded)



Wardy Hill, Coveney



Haddenham



0 50 100 metres

Figure 12.16 *Contrasting fen-edge settlements (sources: Fengate, Pryor 1978; Haddenham, Evans and Serjeantson 1988; Wardy Hill, Coveney, E. Evans 1992).*

Much the same resource potential attracted a small community to colonize a gravel spread on the edge of the fen at Upper Delphs, Haddenham, where boundary ditches and enclosures have been traced over about 5 ha. One element in this complex, on excavation, proved to be a succession from open settlement to enclosure (Figure 12.16). In the open phase, at least two contemporary houses were associated with fields (or cross-ploughed plots). This was succeeded by a ditched enclosure containing a substantial circular house which was later replaced by two houses, the enclosure ditch continuing to function. The sequence suggests a well-established community, possibly of single family size, while the environmental evidence would support the view that occupation was year round. A site of broadly comparable size and form to Upper Delphs was totally excavated at Wardy Hill, Coveney, at the marsh edge on the north side of the Isle of Ely (Figure 12.16). The settlement was enclosed by a ditch and

rampart while the entrance seems to have been defended by a series of outwork ditches. Inside were four circular houses arranged in two pairs which were thought not to be contemporary. The settlement seems to have been occupied from the Middle Iron Age into the early decades of the first century AD, and to judge by the quantity of finds the excavator considered it to have been of high status.

Tattershall Thorpe, Lincs., is altogether different in form and presumably function. It is represented now by a substantial double-ditched enclosure, roughly oval in shape, situated on a gravel rise 5 km from the fen edge. The nature of the internal occupation is unknown but the ditches have been sampled, providing valuable environmental evidence pointing to intensive stock raising. The site would be well suited as a corral for controlling flocks and herds at certain times during the year while the wetlands to the south would have provided admirable summer grazing. It is tempting to see some such system in operation but until the interior of the enclosure is sampled the complexities of the subsistence regime will remain obscure.

The fen edge is clearly an environment of some considerable interest for Iron Age studies, not least because the survival of organic material holds out the possibility of examining the subtleties of the subsistence economy. Settlements occupying the interface between wetland and dry-land resources provide a key to understanding how regional systems work, since they controlled the production of a range of marshland resources some of which may have been desired by the dryland communities of the interior. By studying the processes of exploitation and transmission significant advances in our understanding of Iron Age society are within reach.

East Anglia is still something of an unknown from the point of view of settlement morphology. That said, the care with which the archaeological record has been gathered and curated over recent years has allowed the preparation of distribution maps of material culture which clearly demonstrate a high density of activity during the Iron Age (Davies 1996). A limited number of small rectangular enclosures have been identified as well as the better-known larger earthwork enclosures of hillfort proportions (Davies *et al.* 1991). The overall impression given is that settlements were extensive but were, for the most part, unenclosed. Without enclosing ditches they are less likely to be identified on air photographs.

Finally, to questions of population: extensive field surveys carried out in recent years, especially in Northamptonshire, are revolutionizing our ideas of settlement pattern and necessarily reflect on estimates of population. Until a quantitative assessment is made firm conclusions cannot be attempted, but it is clear even now that by

the third century BC much, if not most, of the river gravel area was settled to capacity and in eastern Northamptonshire settlement was already spreading on to heavy clay land. Exactly the same phenomenon has been recognized in East Anglia, where the Middle Iron Age saw an expansion from the lighter soils of the west on to the boulder clays of the central area. To what extent this phenomenon represents the result of a rapid increase in population in the fourth or third century is a problem to be resolved by future fieldwork and excavation, but even on present showing, by the Middle Iron Age the population of the east Midlands and East Anglia must have been similar in density to that of the chalkland of the south.

The Lower Thames basin

The triangle of land fringed by the Chilterns and the North Downs and dominated by the estuary and lower valley of the river Thames has produced comparatively little good evidence of settlement apart from a number of casual observations and the results of limited excavation. But the few large-scale excavations that are available for assessment are of considerable interest and show the potential richness of the record. At Little Waltham, Essex, a straggling settlement of circular houses, extending for 200 m along the terrace flanking the flood plain of the river Chelmer, is hardly likely to represent less than a hamlet or small village of the Early–Middle Iron Age (Figure 12.17). This is in marked contrast to the strongly defended homestead of Late Iron Age date found at Orsett, commanding the lower reaches of the Thames (Figure 12.17), or the small farm at Farningham Hill in the Darent valley in Kent, 12 km upstream from the Thames, where a modest house, together with a few storage pits, was set within a comparatively slight ditched enclosure. These three examples, together with a few other large-scale excavations (e.g. Gun Hill and Mucking), suggest that the settlement types of the Thames basin conform to the general range found elsewhere in the south-east but are yet too few to warrant a more detailed regional assessment.

The Somerset Levels

The expanse of wetland between the Mendips and the Quantock hills is of considerable archaeological potential but it is only since about 1960 that it has been systematically explored in advance of intensified peat cutting and the lowering of the water table (B. and J. Coles 1986). The best-known area lies between the Polden hills and the Wedmore ridge and includes the two famous Iron Age settlements

of Glastonbury and Meare: Glastonbury was almost entirely excavated between 1892 and 1907 by Bulleid and Gray while Meare, consisting of two separate sites, was partially excavated by the same team from 1908 to 1956 and by Michael Avery from 1966-9. In 1978 the Somerset Levels project began a systematic re-examination of both villages. The literature is extensive (site list, pp. 661, 665) but the clearest and most authoritative overview of the sites in their regional context is provided by Bryony and John Coles (1986, 153-83) while the details of the two lake villages are summarized by Minnitt and Coles (1996).

Glastonbury can fairly be regarded as a 'lake village' in that it was built on a morass, in an area of the Levels where water was prevalent, on an artificial foundation of brushwood and larger timber packed with bracken, rubble and clay. Upon this foundation up to eighty circular buildings had been constructed during the Middle and Late Iron Age (Figure 12.18). The settlement, roughly triangular in shape, was surrounded by a timber palisade, more to retain the artificial island than to provide a defensive enclosure. The circular buildings varied in size and construction. The larger and more elaborate had walls of vertical timbers supporting wattle and daub, and successive floors of clay usually with a hearth in the centre. The door frames were frequently carefully constructed, often with a porch. By no means all of the circular structures conformed to this type: some were without recognizable walls and others without hearths. The particular interest of the site focuses upon the possibility it offers of reconstructing social groupings within the settlement. Assuming that different types of circular building performed different functions, for example for living and sleeping, cooking, storage, weaving, etc., it ought in theory to be possible to define the grouping of structures which a single extended family might inhabit.

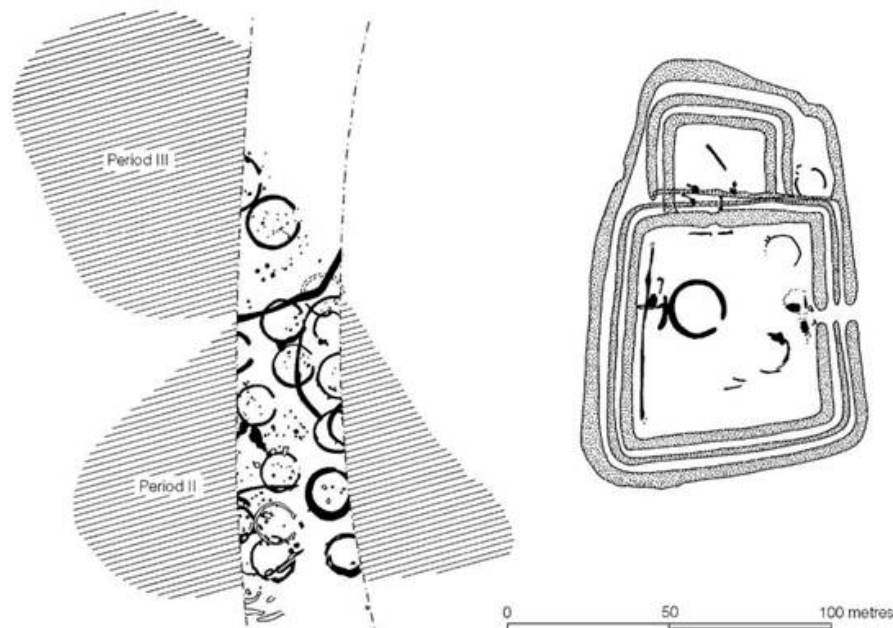


Figure 12.17 Settlements of the Lower Thames basin (sources: Little Waltham, Drury 1978; Orsett Cock, Carter 1998).

An attempt to do this by D.L. Clarke (1972) raised expectations but under critical analysis has been found wanting (B. and J. Coles 1986, 164-71; Barrett 1987). This does not mean, however, that the general approach is invalid and a detailed reassessment is still possible. One thing is clear - the eighty or so circular houses identified in the excavation would have represented many stages of rebuilding during the life of the village, which is thought to have lasted from c. 250 to 50 BC. Rebuilding would have been a continuous process but few snapshots of the village can be offered (Minnitt and Coles 1996, 19-22). The initial settlement of c. 250 BC consisted of five or six houses and some spreads of clay laid to provide space and stability for open air activities. Fences provided windbreaks and were used to protect the edges of the clay spreads. The village at this stage could have accommodated about four extended families numbering some fifty people in all. Within a few decades the settlement grew. New clay spreads were laid, seven more houses were erected and a landing stage was built for boats. By the end of this phase the community may have grown to about 125. Expansion continued after 150 BC, the settlement eventually reaching its maximum size of fourteen or fifteen families making a community of some 200 souls in all. All this time

building and renovation were continuing: the enclosing fence was enhanced and new pathways laid out. By 100 BC the settlement was at its peak but, as the water table began to rise, decline set in and within fifty years the site was completely abandoned. The rising water which brought the village to an end was the very reason that so much of the organic component of the material culture was preserved in such a remarkable condition.

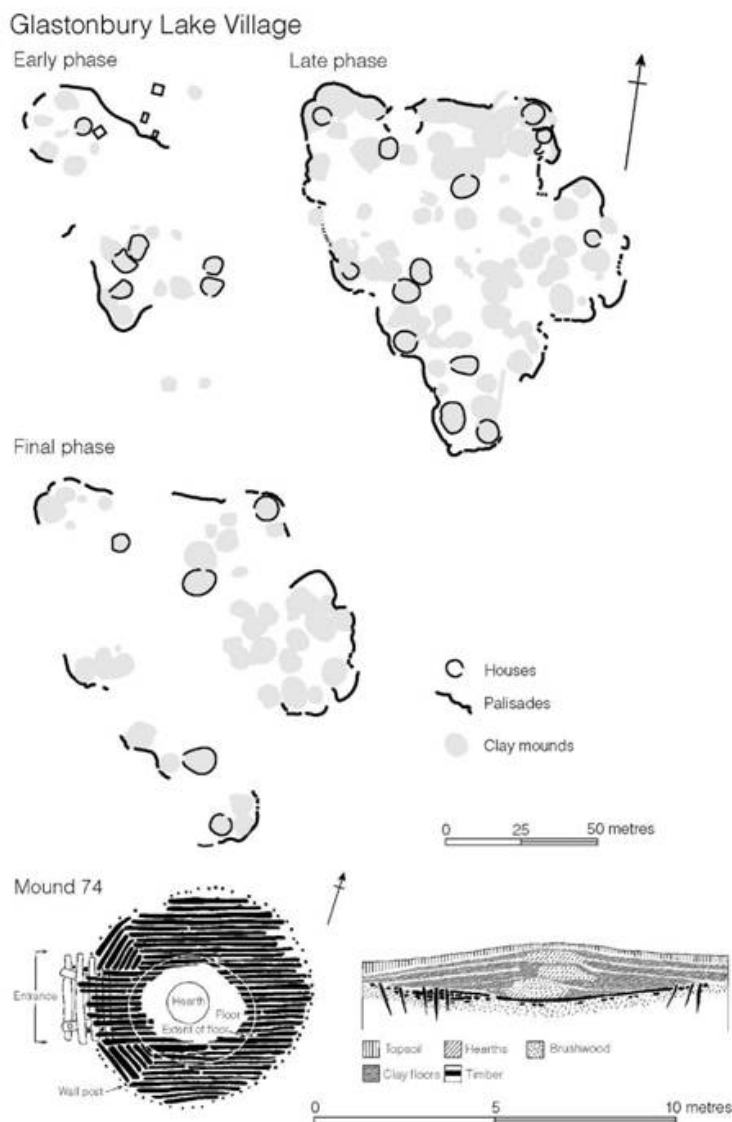


Figure 12.18 Glastonbury, Somerset (sources: Coles and Coles 1986; Coles and Minnitt 1995).

The two 'villages' of Meare were altogether different. They comprise two separate elongated clusters of mounds, 60 m apart, built on the edge of a raised bog without any form of brushwood foundation. The individual mounds, like those of Glastonbury, were built of superimposed clay floors, usually with central hearths which were replaced more often than the floors. Very little evidence was found of superstructures, a fact which has led to the conclusion that the buildings were flimsy and perhaps little more than tents. This does not, however, mean that the settlement was impoverished. The artefacts recovered are impressive in both quality and quantity and there is ample evidence for a range of activities being undertaken, including the manufacture of glass beads. John Coles has put forward the interesting hypothesis that the Meare 'villages' were a very specialized kind of site - the meeting-place of an annual 'trade fair' where people from considerable distances could assemble in peace to trade and exchange goods and to take part in a range of social, and perhaps religious, interactions. Such meetings form an essential component of European folk history and are still evident today in fairs, usually held on saints' days on common land. The Meare site is well situated for intertribal meetings since it lies on the border between the Dobunni and the Durotriges.

Glastonbury and Meare represent two very different kinds of settlement but they are only a part of a far more complex socio-economic system which includes the extensive use of the Mendip caves and of an arc of hillforts which fringe the Levels. The details of the interrelationship of these various settlement elements have still to be worked out.

Houses (Figure 12.19)

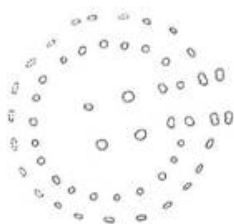
Having considered the variety of settlement sites in the south and east of Britain something must now be said of the houses, or more accurately the circular buildings, within which the community lived and worked. Since more than a thousand house plans are now known, the brief discussion which follows can be little more than a broad overview.

Houses of the late second and early first millennia are now well known, principally from the excavation of the Sussex settlements. Characteristically they are simple circular structures averaging 6 m or so in diameter, constructed of a series of upright timbers placed somewhat irregularly in a circular or oval setting; central supports were seldom employed and indeed were not necessary for structures of such small span. Where huts have been terraced slightly into a sloping hillside, it is evident that the upright timbers did not form the

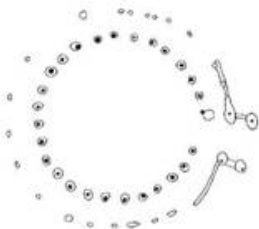
outer wall of the hut but were simply supports for the sloping rafters, the lower ends of which probably rested on the outer edge of the terrace, which in some cases was up to 1.5 m away from the ring of vertical timbers. Thus two areas were created: a central area with a high roof-line where the principal activities of the house were carried out, and a surrounding area between the posts and the wall of the hut which could have served as storage or sleeping space. Approximate calculations for a small hut from Itford Hill, Sussex, show that 14 sq m were available for 'living' and 19 sq m for sleeping and storage (see [Figure 3.8](#)). Few of the early huts show any great refinement in structure but substantial door-posts and short porches are known.

This basic house type continued in use throughout the Iron Age (Guilbert 1981). The sequence at Eldon's Seat (Encombe), Dorset, spanning the period from the eighth to the sixth century, shows a gradual increase in diameter from 6 m up to 9 m for the latest house. There was also a trend towards a more regular spacing of timbers and one hut was provided with an entrance porch. The latest house was very regularly constructed, and the spacing of the vertical posts in relation to the edge of its platform implies that they served not only as rafter supports but also as the wall timbers. A series of structures of comparable date were found within the hillfort of Winklebury, Hants, ranging in size from 8 to 12 m: most of them had short porches. Simple houses of this kind continued into the third or second century BC, for example house 2 at Little Woodbury, Wilts., which can be shown to belong to the Middle Iron Age (see [Figure 12.2](#)).

Little Woodbury, Wilts



Cow Down, Wilts



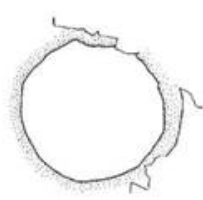
Pimperne Down, Dorset



Little Waltham, Essex



Chalbury, Dorset



Draughton, Northants



Maiden Castle, Dorset



Eldon's Seat, Dorset



Danebury, Hants



Figure 12.19 Plans of southern British houses (sources: Little Woodbury, Bersu 1940; Cow Down, S.C. Hawkes 1995; Pimperne Down, Harding, Blake and Reynolds 1993; Little Waltham, Drury 1978; Chalbury, Whitley 1943; Draughton, Grimes 1961; Maiden Castle, Wheeler 1943; Eldon's Seat, Cunliffe 1968b; Danebury, Cunliffe 1984a).

In parallel to the tradition of simple ring-post houses, more complex structures developed. House 1 at Little Woodbury offers one of the clearest examples. Here two concentric circles of posts were erected, the inner circle being more massive and taking most of the weight of the roof timbers, the outer circle taking the slighter posts. The house is further complicated by the central setting of four timbers which served to support the centre of the roof, and possibly, at the same time, stood above the roof-level to create a louvre for smoke to escape. The Little Woodbury plan is essentially only a modification of the early houses mentioned above, in which the total enclosed area was divided into a central region and peripheral space. Little Woodbury shows the additional modification of a substantial porch or

entrance passage 4.6 m long. Provided with an inner and an outer door, it would have created a trap to prevent cold air from sweeping in. The overall diameter of the house, 14 m, compares with three other large houses of the same general type, one from Cow Down (Longbridge Deverill), Wilts., and one from Pimperne Down, Dorset, both 15 m in diameter, and a third from Old Down Farm, Hants, measuring 11m in diameter. All four houses belong to the period from the eighth to the fifth century: at present no house of comparable size or complexity has been found in the later part of the Iron Age.

A structure of rather different type was found at West Harling, Norfolk. In plan it consisted of a circular ditch broken by two wide causeways, with an internal bank with corresponding openings. Within lay a mass of post-holes which probably belonged to a house-like structure. One interpretation suggests that the roofed area was annular about a central open yard (Clarke 1960, 95), but it would be simpler to reconstruct it as a conventional circular house standing within a ditched enclosure, the ends of the rafters resting on the bank. The possibility that it was a religious building is unlikely in view of the presence of hearths and drainage gullies, which would argue for domestic use. Another West Harling house was of a more conventional structure: a circular setting of posts about 11.5 m in diameter. This too was built in the centre of a circular ditched enclosure about 34 m across.

While houses built of individual posts occur widely, and are likely to survive in most archaeological contexts, it is now clear that less substantial forms of house building were not infrequently employed. At Danebury, Hants, for example, the majority of the houses belonging to the Middle Iron Age were constructed of wattle based on vertical stakes some 2 cm in diameter driven into the ground at intervals of 10-15 cm. It was only at the doorway that substantial timbers were employed to strengthen the entrance gap and give support to the door (Figures 12.20 and 12.21). The buildings varied in diameter from 6 to 9 m. How the roof was constructed is a matter of debate: one possibility is that the vertical wall was bound at the top with withies to form a ring beam upon which the lower ends of rafters were based, but it is equally possible that some of the vertical poles were carried up and bound together at the apex to create the framework for a beehive-like structure entirely of wattle which could then have been weather-proofed with thatch. The door frames of the Danebury houses frequently had two vertical timbers on each side of the door with a space of 20-30 cm between. This would have provided a suitable framework to support a movable door of wattle which could have been slotted into place or removed at will. Similar kinds of stake-built structures have been found at the hillforts of Moel y Gaer, Flints., and

South Cadbury, Somerset, and at Hengistbury Head, Dorset. Clearly, the survival and recognition of such buildings is dependent on a number of factors and the strong probability remains that while many may have passed unnoticed most will have been destroyed by subsequent agricultural activities. The very simplicity of stake-built houses suggests that the type may once have been widespread.

A second type of less substantial house has been noted at Little Waltham, Essex. Here a number of roundhouses were discovered which were represented archaeologically by foundation trenches 10–14 m in diameter. Two types can be recognized: the first, in which the walls consisted of vertical posts placed in an evenly curving trench, and a second of a more polygonal plan which hints that horizontal wall plates may have been adopted. In both types a ring beam at eaves level would have been all that was required to provide the strength necessary to carry the roof. Ring-groove houses of this type are quite common in southern Britain but the simplicity of the plan may well obscure variation in structure. At Danebury, for example, the walls of one such house were composed of vertical planks placed side by side. Elsewhere vertical timbers appear to have been more widely spaced and were presumably infilled with wattle.



Figure 12.20 Stake-built roundhouse found in the hillfort of Danebury, Hants (photograph: Danebury Trust).

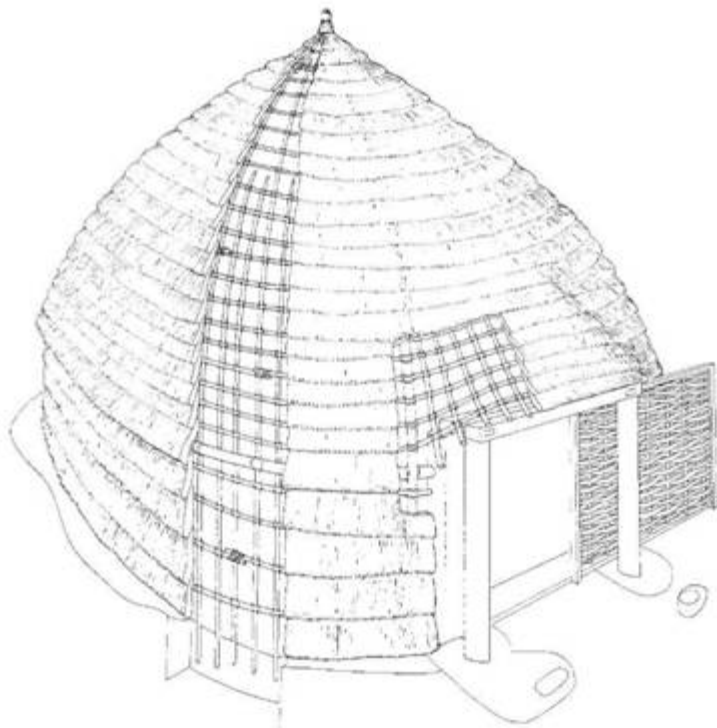


Figure 12.21 *Reconstruction of a stake-built house based on excavated evidence from Danebury, Hants (drawing: Christina Unwin).*

Penannular or completely circular drainage ditches surrounding huts are known on a number of sites, and the type, though uncommon on the chalk, is evidently widespread throughout much of southern Britain. The gully or ditch would serve to collect rain-water running off the roof, either to conserve it or to prevent it from flooding the house in times of heavy rain. Such an arrangement would have been a necessity on less permeable soils as at Draughton, Northants, where a circular enclosing gully was found to be linked by a drainage gutter to the main ditch of the enclosure, but elsewhere gullies would have served to keep the soil, in which the vertical timbers of the walls were bedded, sufficiently drained to slow down their disintegration through rot.

In the western part of the region, particularly in Dorset where stone was readily available, many of the houses were provided with dwarf walls of dry-stone work. In the case of one building at Maiden Castle, the stone outer wall would have been used to bed the ends of the rafters, the main weight of which must have been taken on the concentric setting of large posts. The hut circle from Chalbury, Dorset, on the other hand, while possessing an outer dry-stone wall, was

apparently without central timbers, but while it could easily have been spanned by rafters supported only upon the wall itself, verticals without post-holes may once have existed. Thus there is little structural difference between the huts built wholly of timber and those in which some dry-stone work has been incorporated.

The internal arrangements of the individual houses vary considerably. Frequently, but not invariably, there were hearths either centrally placed, as at Maiden Castle and Glastonbury, or more usually to one side, as they are in the houses at Eldon's Seat and West Overton Down; less frequently bread ovens occur. Some of the huts were also provided with drainage gullies leading from the centre of the hut out of the entrance, either to remove rain-water which may have seeped in through any central gap left in the roof structure or to provide a draught to allow the fire to burn more efficiently. Beneath the floors of some houses, for example at Danebury, grain storage pits had been dug: in other cases smaller holes or even partially buried ceramic containers were found in which food or liquids may have been stored.

While the orientation of houses varies there is a distinct preference for the door to be at the south-east, presumably to benefit from the rising sun and to face away from the prevailing wind. That the orientation may have ritual significance has also been suggested (Oswald 1997). This matter will be considered below (p. 577).

It should be stressed, again, that circular buildings would have served a variety of uses: some undoubtedly provided living space for the social group while others may have been ancillary structures such as cook houses or weaving sheds. In addition many settlements have produced evidence of other structures such as four- or six-post 'granaries' and two-post 'racks' (p. 412), and arcs of slots or post settings which may represent screens or shelters. The average Iron Age homestead must have presented a complex and cluttered appearance which the archaeological evidence allows us only to glimpse.

Summary

In this chapter we have restricted ourselves to a discussion of the homesteads and hamlets of south-eastern Britain. No attempt has been made to consider the larger defended sites, which are usually classed together and referred to as hillforts, nor has much been said of the economic system of which the settlements formed one element. Divisions of this kind are to some extent arbitrary but a line has to be drawn somewhere. Hillforts are more conveniently dealt with together ([chapter 15](#)) since they differ from the homesteads in being a communal undertaking reflecting the exercise of some kind of coercive power and therefore represent a higher order of social

organization than the homestead or hamlet, while the question of the subsistence economy is better understood after the full range of the settlement archaeology has been presented ([chapter 16](#)).

So rich is the settlement evidence from the south and east of Britain that much has had to be omitted, but the main characteristics of the settlements have been summarized and something of their variety made evident. It would be no exaggeration to say that the settlement data from this region are far more prolific than for any other comparable area of Iron Age Europe, with the possible exception of the Netherlands, and yet it is only in a few regions – the Wessex chalklands, the Upper Thames valley and Northamptonshire – that sufficient sites have been excavated on a large enough scale to allow recurring patterns to be recognized and socio-economic systems to be discerned, albeit incompletely.

13

Settlement and the settlement pattern in the west

Beyond the Jurassic Ridge the landscape of Britain becomes more varied. Considerable expanses of old hard rock have created barren mountainous areas like the core of Wales and the Highlands of Scotland while the predominantly westerly air currents ensure that the Atlantic coasts have a higher precipitation rate than much of the rest of the country. Since height above sea-level (which affects temperature) and mean annual rainfall are crucial factors in controlling crop growth, considerable areas of the north and west lie at or beyond the limit of viable agriculture. Thus, slight fluctuations in climate can cause major dislocations in settlement pattern (pp. 33–4). This factor, and the harsh nature of some of the environments, has tended to create an intense regionalism in settlement form and a high degree of specialization in economy.

In this chapter we focus on the western, Atlantic-facing, regions of southern Britain and each discrete zone is treated separately.

The south-west peninsula

The south-west peninsula has a distinctive character unlike any other area of Britain. Bounded on three sides by the sea and separated from Wessex by the marshlands of Somerset, its communities have developed along individual lines influenced more by the structure and food-producing potential of the land than by external stimulus. The peninsula is dominated by six areas of moorland: the sandstone uplands of Exmoor in the north-east and the granite masses of Dartmoor, Bodmin, Hensbarrow, Carnmenelis and Penwith – all providing some areas of light, if not particularly fertile, soil more suitable for pasture than for arable farming (Figure 13.1). Between these upland masses lie the Culm measures of the middle Devonian and the Permian rocks yielding an intractable clay soil far less congenial to prehistoric settlement.

The literature concerning the Iron Age settlement pattern in the south-west has grown considerably in recent years. For the

environmental background the reader is referred to three important papers summarizing the evidence from Cornwall (Caseldine 1980) and Devon (Caseldine and Maguire 1981; Caseldine and Hatton 1996). Cornish defended settlements are discussed in detail by Nicholas Johnson and Peter Rose (1982) and the background to the Cornish Iron Age is assessed by Henrietta Quinnell (1986). The first-millennium BC settlements of Devon are fully treated by Bob Silvester (1979). Two major multiperiod surveys have also been published, on Bodmin Moor (Johnson and Rose 1994) and Exmoor (Riley and Wilson-North 2001).

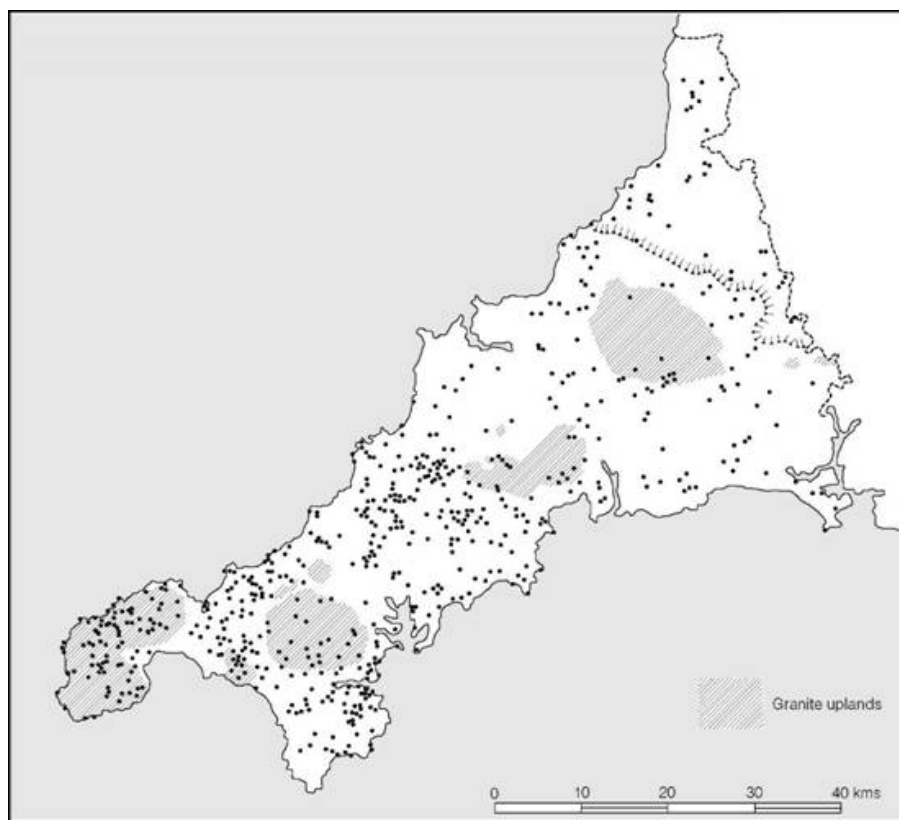


Figure 13.1 *Distribution of enclosed settlements, including rounds and cliff castles, in Cornwall (source: Johnson and Rose 1982).*

Moorland settlements

In [chapter 3](#) the principal types of settlement centring upon the Dartmoor massif and dating to the late second and early first millennia were discussed. Briefly summarized, they included large

enclosed villages, sometimes with attached stockpens, sited around the south and west limits of the moor; open villages with huts linked by stone walls found in much the same area; and small farmsteads of one or two huts associated with a few embanked fields. This last type is concentrated on the more protected and correspondingly drier eastern edges of the moor. The dating of these Middle–Late Bronze Age settlements is notoriously difficult, for while there can be little doubt that many of them began to be occupied in what is conventionally the Bronze Age, the upper limit of dating is difficult to define. In some cases they may have continued in use as late as the latter half of the first millennium. Three Dartmoor settlements have produced artefacts suggesting an Iron Age date – Kestor, near Chagford, Foale's Arrishes and Gold Park ([Figure 13.2](#)). All three settlements comprise a group of huts scattered among small rectangular fields with a single larger hut protected by an enclosing wall. Strictly, this type of site is little more than an agglomeration of small homesteads but their close spacing and the existence of a single more impressive house might suggest that we are dealing with hamlets or even villages, in which some form of class structure prevailed. A tighter nucleation can be recognized at other, undated, sites such as Broadall Lake in the Upper Yealm valley, Devon, where ten circular huts were grouped along the side of two fields.

The excavation at Kestor has provided a valuable insight into a type of settlement which may tentatively be dated to the fifth or fourth century BC. One of the isolated huts, lying at the junction of three field walls, was totally excavated. It was a simple structure, some 8.2 m across internally, enclosed by an outer wall to take the lower ends of the rafters, which were further supported by a circular setting of posts and a central post to hold up the crown of the roof. Internal fittings were restricted to a hearth and an area of cobbling close to the entrance. The larger hut, built towards the centre of the enclosure known as the Round Pound, was 11.3 m across internally and of a more complex structure, but here too internal posts acted as roof supports – the difference being that a central opening seems to have been provided with a drip-pit beneath to collect and drain away rain-water ([Figure 13.4](#)). The reason for the opening is thought to be that the hut was used for iron-smelting and fumes therefore had to be removed. Inside were found a small bowl furnace filled with iron slag and nearby a forging pit, presumably for reheating the bloom prior to the hammering necessary to remove impurities. However, some doubt has been expressed as to the date of the ironworking, one possibility being that it was a medieval intrusion (Silvester 1979, 178–9). The hut was enclosed within an oval stonewalled pound 30–33 m across, provided with a single narrow doorway opening on to a terraced

drove road which ran between the surrounding fields. A second, much smaller hut lay close to the pound wall but was completely undated and may indeed belong to the medieval period. While it would be wrong to argue from the evidence of one site alone, and one where there is some doubt about the stratigraphy, the fact that the largest hut may have belonged to the iron-smith could be taken to be an indication of the high status in which the community held such a man.

The close relationship between the pound, the trackway, the other huts and the fields leaves little doubt that all functioned together. Indeed, it was possible for the excavator to show that the ancient ploughsoil stopped 1.8 m clear of one of the huts and that a slight negative lynchet had been formed, demonstrating clearly that the field had been ploughed after the hut had been constructed. Nearby, the ploughsoil was found to overlie a layer of peat, which was shown by pollen analysis to belong to the sub-Atlantic period – a time when the climatic conditions were becoming much wetter. The Kestor settlement and its fields therefore belonged to a community which colonized an area of virgin moorland after the middle of the first millennium, at a time when climatic deterioration had already set in. In all probability it was one of the last inroads to be made on the moor before wetter weather drove the long-established population from the uplands.

The presence of fields and the discovery of a saddle quern are sufficient to show that arable farming was practised, but the field systems tend to be far more limited in extent than those of the south-east, implying – but by no means proving – that corn production was of subsidiary significance. Of the pastoral aspects of the economy little can be said: animal bones are destroyed by the acid moorland soils, and relevant artefacts, apart from a spindle whorl from Kestor, are exceedingly rare. Flocks and herds must, however, have been a dominant feature of the early first-millennium economy, to judge by the large pounds of Middle–Late Bronze Age date, and in all probability pastoral activities continued to be of first-rate importance throughout the latter part of the period – as, indeed, the multiple-enclosure forts to be described below imply.

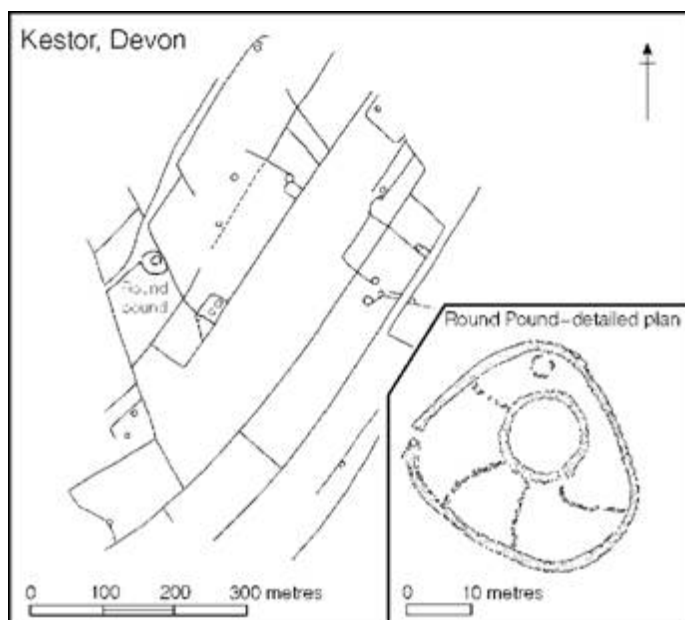
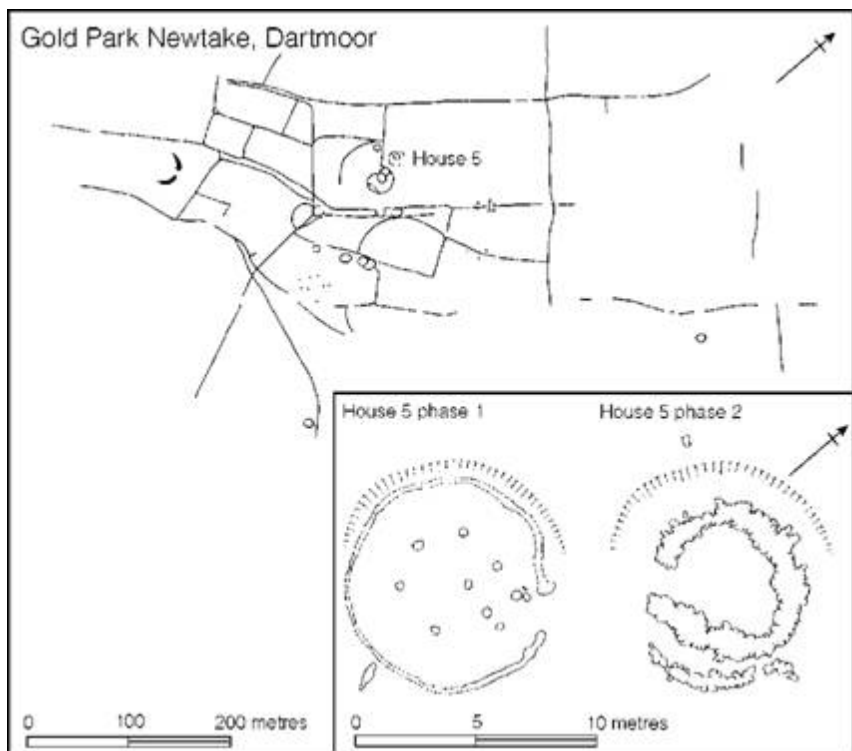


Figure 13.2 The settlements at Kestor and Gold Park, Devon (sources: Kestor, A. Fox 1955; Gold Park, Gibson 1992).

The second moorland site to receive detailed archaeological attention was Gold Park on the north side of Dartmoor only one kilometre or so north of Grimspound. The settlement consisted of a number of rectangular fields and droveways, with huts scattered between them and one hut in a circular enclosure. The hut chosen for excavation was an isolated structure. Two very distinct phases of construction were recognized. In the first the house was built of timber and was represented by an external drip gully showing that the house would have been 8 m in diameter with the weight of its roof supported on a circular setting of timber uprights (Figure 13.2). In the second constructional phase the structure was rebuilt in stone, with an internal diameter of 4–4.5 m. Radiocarbon dates for the timber house suggest a Middle Iron Age date in the fourth to second centuries, with the possibility that the stone building belongs to the first century BC. The few potsherds recovered would support this later date. Little evidence was found to reflect upon the economy of the settlement but its moorland fringe location was ideal for a family exploiting the arable and woodlands of the lower slope and the grazing of the higher moor.

Scattered huts among small rectangular fields is a pattern of settlement reflected over most of the south-west peninsula from Dartmoor to Land's End. But while many such sites are known, few have been excavated outside Dartmoor itself. One site, Bodrifty on Mulfra Hill near Penzance, Cornwall (Figure 13.3), has however provided some details in response to limited excavation. Here more than twenty simple circular huts were spread over a tract of land 0.4 km across, but at least nine are clustered together and were later enclosed by a pound wall built probably in the second or first century BC at about the time when some of the huts show signs of rebuilding. In the original pre-pound settlement, beginning perhaps as early as the sixth or fifth century, the individual huts were joined by lengths of walling rather like the technique employed on some of the Dartmoor villages such as Stanton Down. The huts themselves (Figure 13.4) are closely similar in structure to the Dartmoor examples, with wide stone walls, central hearths and sometimes internal settings of posts to help support the rafters in the case of the larger buildings. The excavation produced few finds, but spindle whorls and saddle querns give some hint of the agricultural and pastoral activities of the community. The significance of Bodrifty lies in the relatively large quantities of pottery recovered, ranging from types which would not be out of place in sixth- to fifth-century contexts in Wessex to jars of the second to first centuries decorated in the South-Western Decorated style. The ceramic evidence allows the possibility that occupation continued well into the first century BC. Other Cornish sites show that once established many

of them continued in use into, and often throughout, the Roman period.

Thus the Dartmoor and Cornish settlements are very close in details of planning, structure and economy, but on Dartmoor while there is evidence to suggest limited occupation continuing to the first century BC no sites are known to have continued into the Roman period. The contrast with Cornwall is striking, but can be explained if it is assumed that the onset of sub-Atlantic conditions forced the inhabitants of the high moors to abandon their traditional farmlands, while those living around the fringes of the less elevated and more hospitable Cornish moors were able to continue and even expand their territories. If this is correct, it could mean a gradual shift of population away from Dartmoor and Bodmin Moor during the latter part of the Iron Age. It is necessary, therefore, to consider where these dislocated pastoralists might have settled.

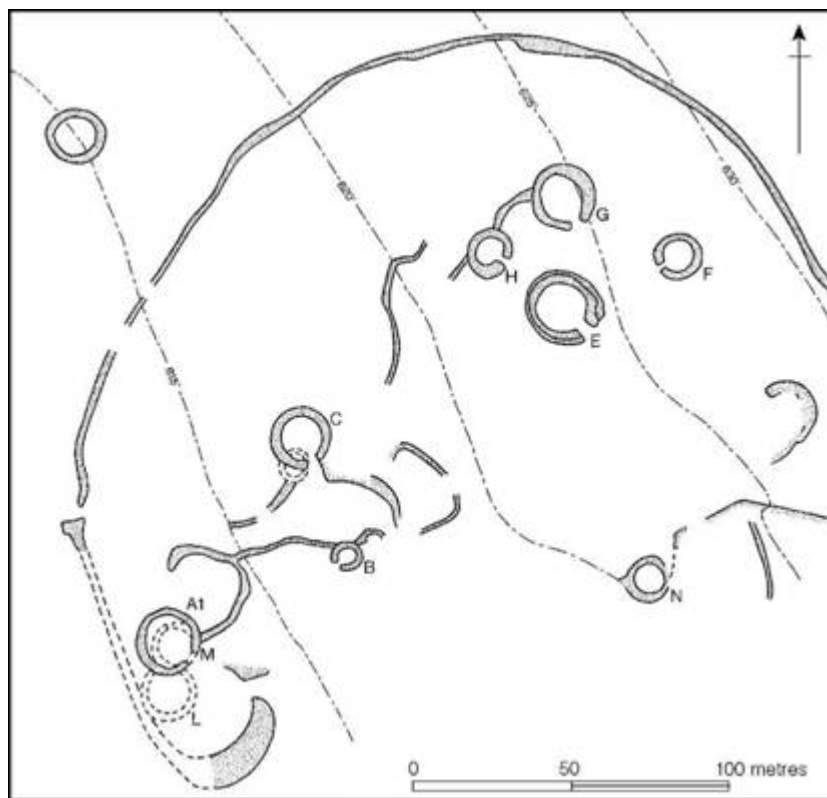


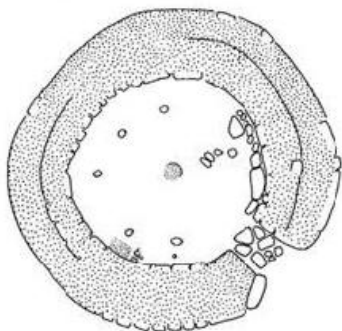
Figure 13.3 *The settlement at Bodrifty, Cornwall. Letters refer to the identifications in the excavator's report (source: Dudley 1957).*

Multiple-enclosure forts

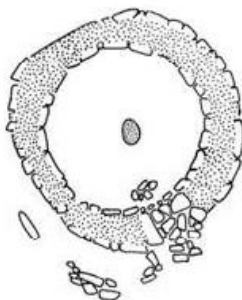
The lowland areas of Devon and eastern Cornwall are densely scattered with settlements commonly referred to as multiple-enclosure forts ([Figures 13.5–13.7](#)), evidently designed for pastoral communities and (where evidence is available) not built until the fourth or third century BC. It is tempting to see these structures as the successors of the moorland settlements, colonizing the richer low-lying soils of the Devon and Cornish hills, but until the dating of a sufficient sample has been established it would be unwise to be too dogmatic as to their origins and relationships.

Characteristically, the multiple-enclosure settlements are often sited, more for pastoral convenience than for strength, on hill-slopes or the ends of ridges overlooking springs or river valleys. Normally the inner enclosure, between 0.2 and 1.6 ha in extent, is defended by a fairly massive bank and ditch laid out in a circular or sub-rectangular plan with a single entrance in one side. The additional enclosures were created in several ways ([Figure 13.5](#)). At Milber Down Camp, Devon, two outer banks and ditches were arranged concentrically with the inner earthwork, both enclosing a considerable additional hectareage. An even more impressive example of this type is Clovelly Dykes, where two enclosures are concentric with the main camp and two additional areas are attached to one side of the outermost, thus providing four separate enclosed areas in addition to the central element. All were interlinked with entrances, the main entrance being so sited as to give easy access to nearby springs. A variation on this type can be seen at Castle Dore, Cornwall, at Denbury, south Devon, and at several other sites where the outer enclosure is pendent upon the inner, the two ramparts being close-spaced for part of their length but diverging widely towards the entrance to form an outer enclosure. A third type occurs in which the main camp is provided with a separate annex attached to the side with the entrance. Strictly, the little fort at Blackbury Castle, Devon, belongs to this class, but here the passage between the two entrances was flanked by banks and ditches, giving rise to the so-called barbican approach. More distant cross-banks were also extensively used, usually to cut off the neck of the promontory or spur upon which the main enclosure was situated. This type of arrangement frequently enclosed a substantial hectareage, which almost invariably included springs or streams.

Bodrifty, Cornwall

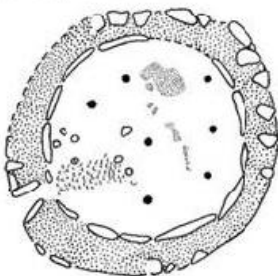


Hut E



Hut C

Kestor, Devon



Hut 1



Main hut



Figure 13.4 House plans from south-west Britain (sources: Bodrifty, Dudley 1957; Kestor, A. Fox 1955).

Milber Down



Clovelly Dykes



Denbury



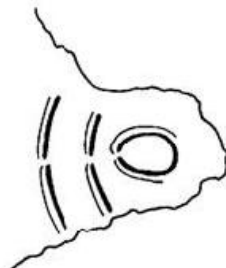
Hall Rings



Helsbury Castle



Round Wood Feock



0 100 200 300 400 500 metres

Figure 13.5 Multiple-enclosure forts in Devon and Cornwall (sources: A. Fox 1953, 1961b).

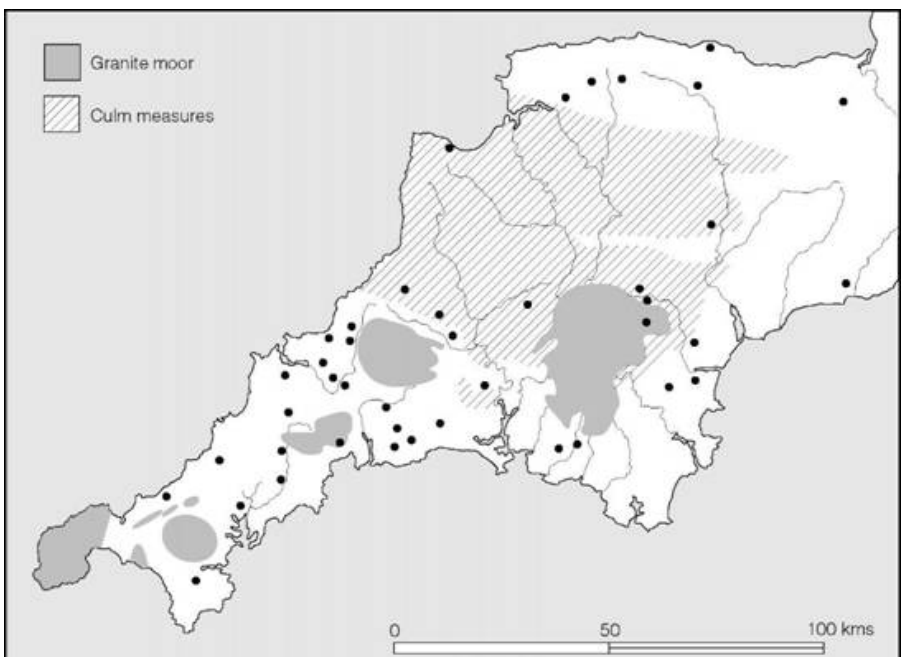


Figure 13.6 *Distribution of multiple-enclosure forts in south-west Britain (source: A. Fox 1961b).*

The intention behind the siting and planning of these settlements is clear enough: the inner enclosures, some of which were comparable in size to enclosures of Little Woodbury type though others were smaller, presumably formed the inhabited area where the owner and family lived while the outer enclosures were designed to protect the homestead pastures and their watering-places.



Figure 13.7 *The multiple-enclosure fort of Castle-an-Dinas, Cornwall (photograph: Dr J.K.S. St Joseph. Crown Copyright reserved).*

The most extensively examined example of a multiple-enclosure fort is the double-ditched enclosure at Killibury, Cornwall. Excavation within the inner enclosure has produced ample evidence of long-lived occupation in the form of a dense scatter of post-holes associated with a depth of stratified occupation levels. This contrasts markedly with the space between the two defensive enclosures where a single trial trench exposed only a series of shallow gullies, showing that activity in the outer enclosure had been slight. Much the same picture is provided by Castle Dore, Cornwall. In a reassessment of the 1936–7 excavation, it has been argued (Quinnell and Harris 1985) that the densely occupied interior was in use from the fourth to first centuries BC, during which time there were a series of circular timber buildings sited mainly against the rampart in the southern half of the enclosure. The outer enclosure was not extensively examined but in the late phase a single hut was identified close to the outer gate.

Apart from pottery, artefacts are not particularly prolific from the few multiple-ditched enclosures that have been excavated but signs of moderate wealth have come from Milber Down Camp, in the form of an iron dagger handle, and from Castle Dore where armlets of bronze, shale and glass have been found as well as glass beads (Fitzpatrick 1985b; Henderson 1985). Items of this kind, together with the effort

required to construct the impressive earthworks of these sites, suggest that multiple-enclosure settlements were the homesteads of an élite. It is hardly surprising therefore that Castle Dore should have produced sherds of imported wine amphorae of first-century BC and first-century AD date.

The form of the enclosures and their general orientation towards rivers or streams has long suggested that the economy depended heavily on livestock. The nature of the husbandry is difficult to assess, since animal bones seldom survive in the acid soils of the area. The consistent occurrence of spindle whorls does, however, point to the significance of sheep and one can hardly doubt that cattle too were important. Field systems were notably absent from the vicinity of the enclosures, but that some cereal cultivation was carried out seems certain in the light of the evidence from Killibury, where emmer wheat, spelt wheat and oats were identified. The relative balance between husbandry and cultivation necessarily remains unclear but the overall impression must be that the economic wealth of the élite was founded on their control of flocks and herds.

Rounds (Figure 13.8)

Another type of habitation site occurs widely in Cornwall and north-west Devon, usually in hilly country 60–120 m above sea-level. These settlements, called rounds in Cornwall, consist of a simple banked and ditched enclosure, seldom exceeding a hectare in extent and sited invariably on good arable land. Inside, a few huts were usually built close against the bank. In size and form, however, rounds display a considerable variety (Johnson and Rose 1982). Several have been excavated: the round at Trevisker, Cornwall, produced evidence of two successive Iron Age phases, the later comprising a 1.2 ha enclosure. The settlement, which dated to the second or early first century BC, superseded an earlier unenclosed settlement dating back to the second millennium. At Castle Gotha, Cornwall, a 0.6 ha enclosure and its two huts, built late in the second century BC, continued in occupation for about 500 years.

Detailed fieldwork in Cornwall (Thomas 1966b; Johnson and Rose 1982) has shown that rounds were densely distributed, varying from one per 2.1 square km to one per 4.5 square km (Figure 13.1), but since only a few have been excavated, it is impossible to say that all were in use at the same time; many of them may not have been built until the Roman period. Nevertheless, as a settlement type rounds were probably widespread before the first century BC. The nature of the economy is difficult to assess but rotary querns and a possible iron sickle from Trevisker indicate that cereal growing played a significant part.

Courtyard houses (Figures 13.9–13.11)

A different type of settlement, the so-called courtyard house, is found on the high ground in west Cornwall. This is essentially a central paved ‘courtyard’ surrounded by rooms and byres, the whole complex being enclosed with a massive stone wall, usually with a single entrance leading into the yard. This conventional view – that the ‘courtyards’ were open – has, however, been challenged by the suggestion that the entire structure was covered by a single roof. If so then the ‘courtyard’ should be interpreted as a communal living space with rooms off (Wood 2001). While the suggestion is possible, one might question whether the substantial timbers needed to create the roof structure would have been readily available. When courtyard houses occur in clusters, as they do at Chysauster (Figures 13.9 and 13.10), the appearance is not at all unlike a deserted medieval village.

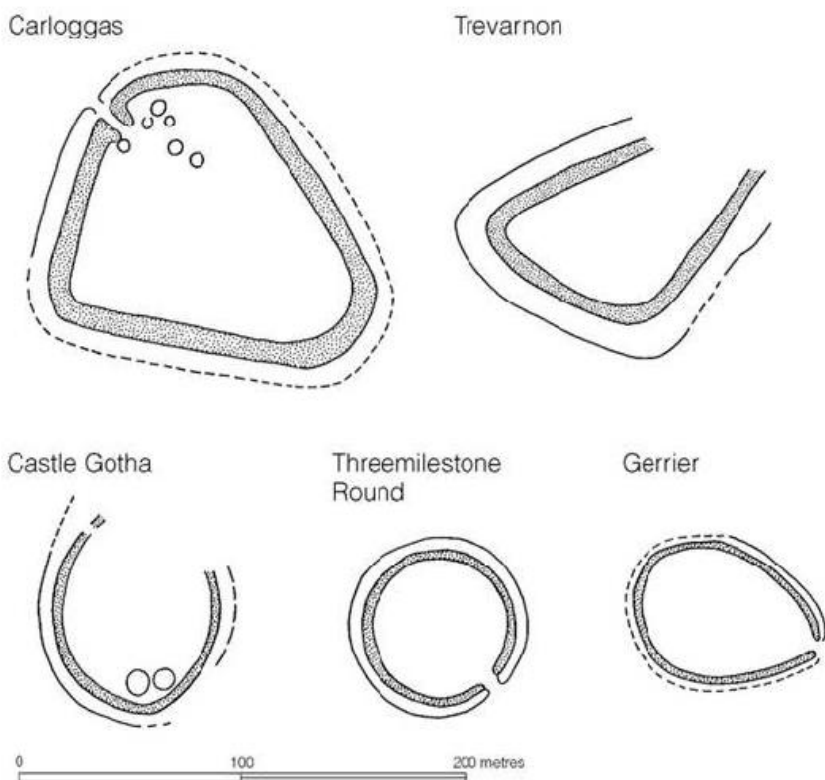


Figure 13.8 Plans of Cornish rounds (source: A.C. Thomas 1966b).

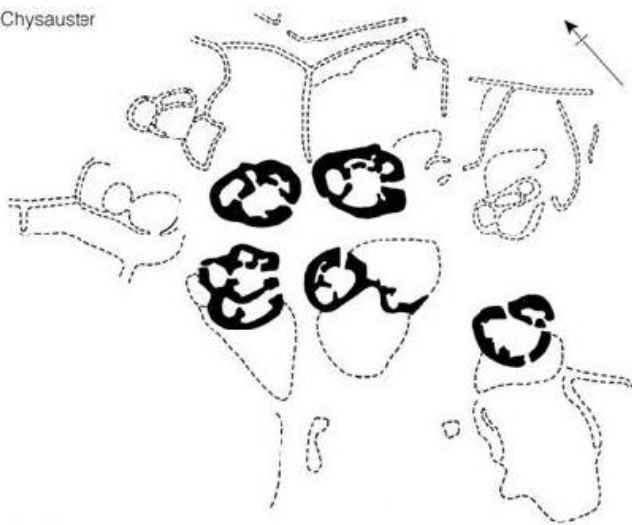
Courtyard houses are often associated with field systems. One of the best preserved of these is an extensive system found to extend along

the slope on which Chysauster was built. Survey and trial excavation suggest that the system began to be constructed in the Bronze Age, but the fields around the settlement were later modified to form a more irregular pattern, strongly lynched (Smith 1996), perhaps in an attempt to conserve soil as the village of courtyard houses developed.

At Carn Euny, where excavation of a cluster of courtyard houses has been thorough, the complex growth of the settlement can be appreciated by observing the relationship of the various walls. Here the courtyard houses represented the last phase in a settlement which began probably as early as the sixth or fifth century with circular timber buildings. It was early in this sequence that a fogou (an underground chamber) was built.

Whether single or in groups, courtyard houses are usually unenclosed but several sites are known where houses are contained within a round (Figure 13.11). At Porthmeor at least three houses and their gardens were enclosed in this way at a date subsequent to their erection, while at Goldherring the round contained a single house with its cultivation plots outside. Where evidence of date is available, it is generally found that courtyard houses could not have begun before the first century BC and the majority of them continued in use throughout the Roman era. In a thorough review of the dating evidence Henrietta Quinnell has argued that courtyard houses are best regarded as a Roman phenomenon (1986, 120).

Chysauster



Carn Euny



0 50 100 metres

Figure 13.9 Courtyard houses at Chysauster and Carn Euny, Cornwall
(sources: Chysauster, H.O'N. Hencken 1933; Carn Euny, Christie 1978).



Cliff castles (Figure 13.12)

Cliff castles, situated as their popular name suggests on rugged headlands jutting into the sea and protected from landward approach by complex lines of banks and ditches, feature prominently in the archaeological literature. Their similarity to comparable structures in Brittany has been used to argue for an immigration of Breton Veneti into the south-west in the first century BC. Such a view must now be discarded since several of the cliff castles have produced pottery of considerably earlier date and it is simplest to see the Cornish and Breton sites as the obvious response, of communities requiring defence, to closely similar landscape potentials. This is not, however, to deny contact between the two peninsulas over many centuries.

The choice of dramatic location and the investment of energy in creating the, often substantial, defences imply a desire to impress, but the purpose of these structures is still quite uncertain. Those which have been examined by excavation have usually produced domestic debris and traces of small circular houses, but the remoteness of many of the sites, their exposure to extremes of weather and the comparatively limited area within suitable for habitation together make them far from ideal settlement locations. While they could have been places of refuge or even the homes of the élite it is not unreasonable to suggest that they may have served as sacred locations symbolically sited in the liminal space between land and sea. They are all dramatic locations and some incorporate natural phenomena like the great rock-stack of Trevyn Dinas (Sharp 1992; Herring 1994). A thorough excavation of one of the cliff castles may throw some light on the question.

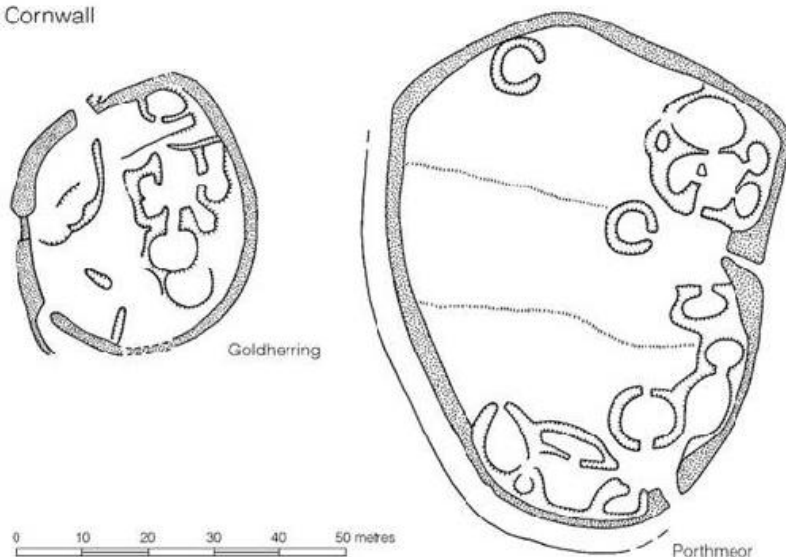


Figure 13.11 Courtyard houses built into rounds (sources: Goldherring, Guthrie 1969; Porthmeor, Hirst 1936).

Summary

The landscape and settlement pattern of the south-west peninsula is diverse but the majority of the settlements can be divided into two broad categories: minor enclosures, i.e. the rounds; and major enclosures, the multiple-enclosure forts and, perhaps, the cliff castles. In addition there is a scatter of unenclosed farmsteads about which very little is known. What are noticeably absent are the large hillforts of Wessex type which, we suggest, represent the power centres of large territorial groupings. In other words this level of social organization, so evident in the centre south, does not appear to be present in the south-west. Instead the most appropriate model would seem to be a simple three-tier structure with the major enclosures representing the residences of the élite while the minor enclosures were the homesteads of their vassals. Below these would have come the unfree living in the unenclosed settlements. In such a system one might expect the élite to be more concerned with wealth in the form of livestock, leaving the vassals to till the land and to provide them with grain on a tithe basis in return for protection and patronage. The archaeological evidence would not contradict such a model but is hardly yet sufficient to support it or to suggest an alternative.

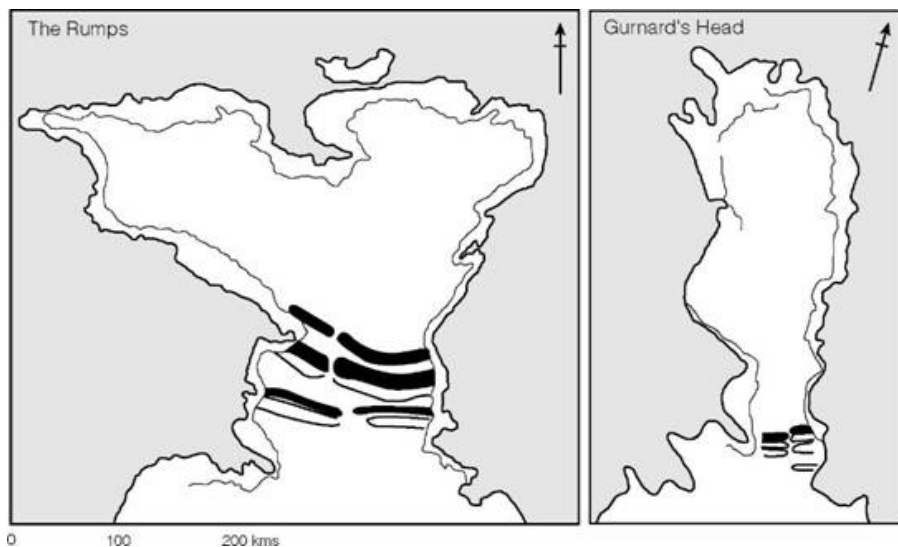


Figure 13.12 Cornish cliff castles (sources: *The Rumps*, Brooks 1964; *Gurnard's Head*, A.S.R. Gordon 1941).

It is tempting to suggest that the pastoral-dominated economy of the south-west mitigated against the growth of political centralization to the extent to which it appears to have developed in the south-east. Instead, there arose a society composed of individual lordships broadly of equal status across much of the region. It was a system that was to persist long after the Roman invasion and into the Dark Ages.

Wales and the Borderlands

That part of the British Isles that lies west of the Severn–Dee line is, for the purposes of this book, regarded as part of the western zone of Britain although strictly it is divided into two quite separate regions by a central mountainous spine – a coastal ocean-facing region and an inland border region permeated by the tributaries of the rivers Severn and Dee (Figure 13.13). The coastal region itself divides into several sub-regions but for convenience we will make a somewhat arbitrary divide between the south and west and the north.

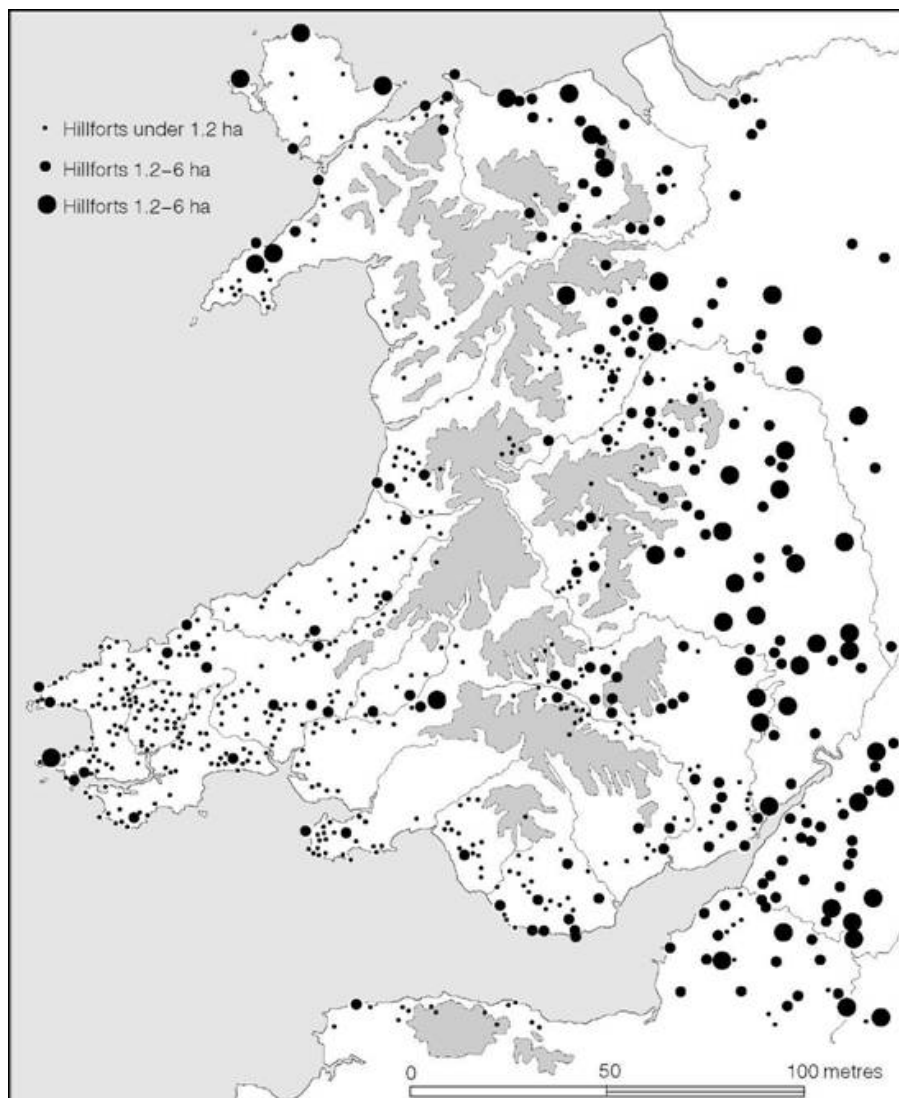


Figure 13.13 *Defended settlements in Wales (source: Davies and Lynch 2000).*

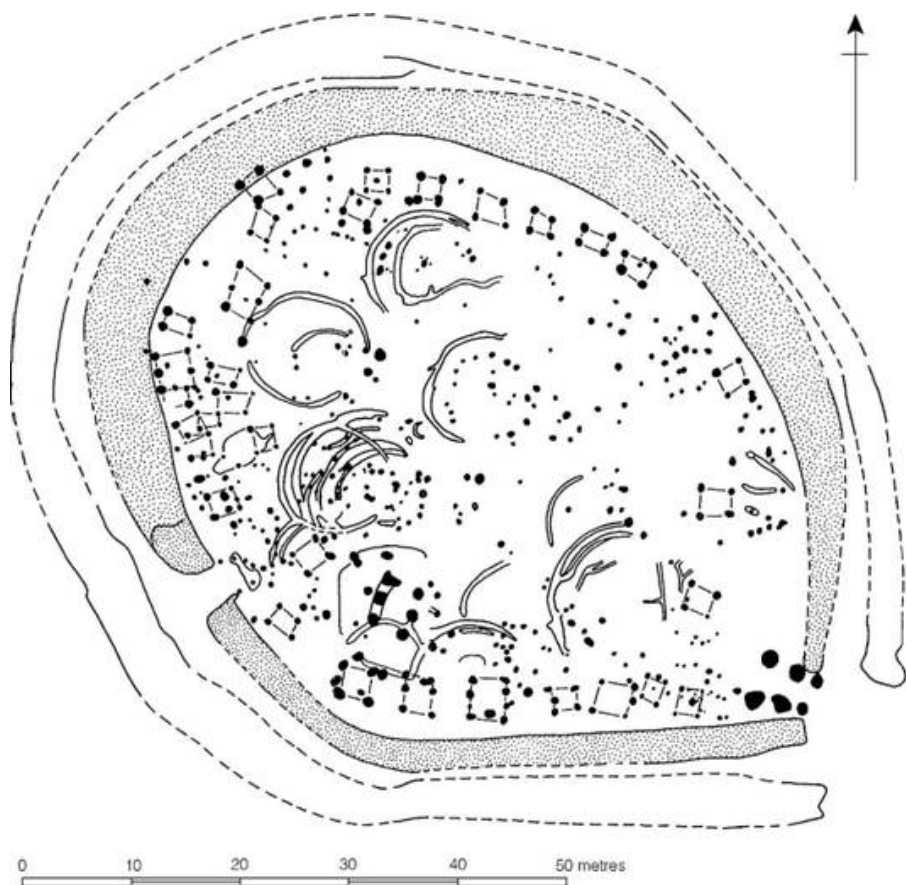


Figure 13.14 *Walesland Rath, Dyfed* (sources: Wainwright 1971a; G. Williams 1988).

South and west Wales

The southern coastal area of Wales, stretching from the Usk valley to Pembrokeshire, was in many ways similar in its settlement pattern to the south-west peninsula of England, a similarity which can be explained, in part at least, by the geomorphological likeness of the two areas. The Carboniferous and Triassic rocks of Glamorganshire and Monmouthshire and the Ordovician rocks of the western counties give rise to soils comparable to those of Devon and eastern Cornwall, while the craggy coastline west of Swansea Bay could easily be mistaken for Cornwall. Similarly, the predominantly north-south flowing rivers tend to cut the territory, lying between the mountains and the sea, into strips and blocks, making communication by land difficult.

Two very useful surveys of settlement in the region have been

published: the Royal Commission has surveyed all the Iron Age settlements in Glamorganshire (RCHM(W) Glamorganshire 1, 1976) while the settlements of Carmarthenshire have been considered in an environmental and historical framework by George Williams (1978, 1979, 1988).

Unenclosed hut groups, generally undated, occur in Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire but they are ill-known compared with the Dartmoor sites. One group, partly excavated in 1899, lay on the top of Moel Trigarn in the Prescelly Mountains. Aerial photography has shown that some of the huts pre-date the multiple walls of the later hillfort and must therefore belong to an open settlement of some size.

Multiple-enclosure settlements of the types defined in the south-west occur in some number in all four of the south Welsh counties. Site location again indicates a preference for valley-sides dominating springs or streams, suggesting that here, as in the south-west, the enclosures were constructed by predominantly pastoral communities more concerned with watering their flocks and herds than with purely military considerations.

The West Country round also has its counterpart in the rath of south-west Wales. It is estimated that of the 580 hillforts in Wales about 230 enclose less than 0.4 ha, and of these three-quarters lie in the south-west ([Figure 13.13](#)). While it is true that many were occupied in the Roman period, and some may even have been constructed then, a high percentage probably date back to the Iron Age. Total excavation of Walesland Rath near Haverfordwest, Pems., provides a rare insight into the structure and development of this type of establishment ([Figure 13.14](#)). Here an oval-shaped area, 64 by 49 m internally, was enclosed by a bank and ditch pierced by two entrances. The south-east gate was massively constructed, with three pairs of timbers which must have once supported a tower, while the western entrance was flanked by dry-stone walling, with its gate set back within the line of the ramparts. Internally the enclosure was packed with timber structures, including at least six circular timber huts, several of which show signs of rebuilding on a number of occasions. A more unusual type of building was constructed from three pairs of large timbers; this resembles the structures found in the Wessex and Welsh Borderland hillforts. The provision of an eaves-drip trench around it shows that it was roofed and may possibly have been a house but does not necessarily preclude the possibility of its serving as a granary in this context. A maze of post-holes arranged in alignments around the periphery of the enclosure close to the rampart are best interpreted as a zone of four- and six- post storage buildings, reconstructed on numerous occasions. Dating evidence at Walesland

Rath was sparse, but radiocarbon determinations allow the first phase to be assigned to the third century BC or a little earlier, while the second phase, defined by the rebuilding of the rampart on a more massive scale and the blocking of the west gate, began in the early part of the first century BC. Occupation continued into the third century AD.

A second excavated site in the same category is Coygan Camp, sited on a promontory of Carboniferous limestone overlooking Carmarthen Bay. An initial occupation, tentatively assigned to the eighth to second centuries, was followed by the construction of the enclosure bank and ditch. Two entrances were provided: a north-west gate, the approach to which was further protected by a length of additional rampart built across the neck of the promontory, and a south-west entrance leading down to the marshy pasture at the base of the hill. Contemporary internal structures were not found, nor was the material culture particularly rich, apart from a pair of bronze early La Tène bracelets, but a large quantity of animal bones was well preserved in the alkaline soil. The collection from the enclosure phase shows that numerically cattle predominated, amounting to 64 per cent of the total, with sheep/goats a mere 16 per cent, closely followed by pigs at 15 per cent. Allowing for the fact that a single cow produced about seven times the meat yield of a sheep, it will be evident that the basic diet was beef, the intake of mutton and pork being negligible by comparison. The relative importance of meat to grain cannot be assessed, but quernstones were very rare and storage facilities unrecorded. In all probability, the inhabitants were pastoralists, using the fertile pastures of the neighbouring Devonian soils and the marshland fringes at the foot of the hill for rearing and maintaining herds of cattle. The proximity of the sea provided an additional food source: fish bones have not been preserved but shellfish were collected in quantity from the estuary of the Taf and from the rocky pools at the base of the Pendine Cliffs. Like Walesland Rath, Coygan Camp continued to be occupied well into the Roman period. The neighbouring sites of Trelissey and Cwmbrwyn, both earthwork enclosures, also contained substantial Roman-style masonry buildings. It is not unreasonable to suggest that here too we are dealing with Iron Age settlements which remained in use for some centuries after the Roman Conquest.

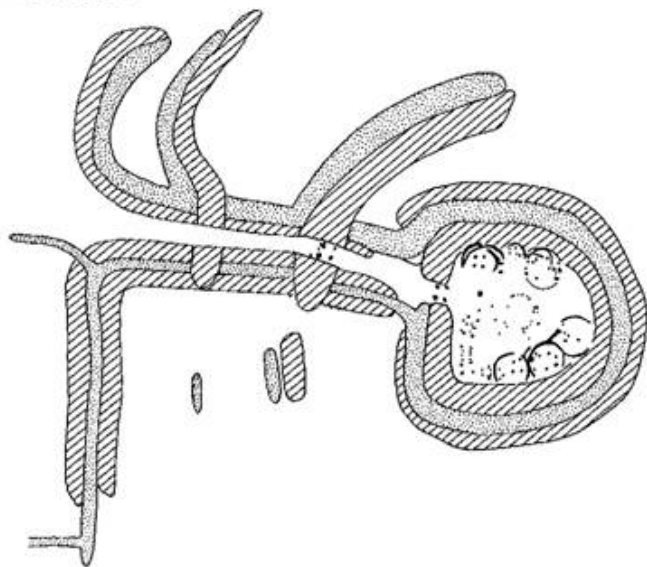
Several other settlements which could be classed either as raths or as multiple enclosures have recently been examined. At Parc Cynnog, not far from Coygan Camp in Carmarthenshire, the earthworks of a partially multivallate enclosure, about 0.4 ha in area, were sectioned, but little evidence of internal occupation was discovered. However, the excavation of Castell Coyan, Carm., produced clear indications of

circular buildings of timber within a small enclosure, but dating evidence was lacking. At Pen y Coed, Llangynog, Carm., the almost total excavation of a small embanked and ditched enclosure yielded a complete plan of an Iron Age farmstead (Figure 13.15) with one large roundhouse, a yard divided by fences and a four-post granary set against the bank. The entrance to the enclosure was approached by a road flanked by ditches similar to the banjo enclosures of Wessex. A similar arrangement is evident at Woodside Camp, one of a pair of presumably contemporary enclosures barely 50 m apart (Figure 13.15). Excavations at Woodbarn Rath, Caer Cadwgan and Pembry Mountain, though on a less extensive scale, have all shown occupation to have been quite intensive, the last two yielding significant samples of cereals (see below p. 434).

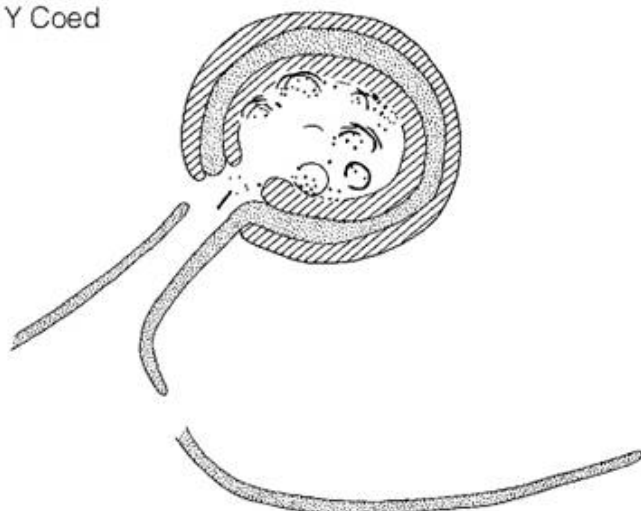
The long corridor-like approach to the enclosures of Woodside, Pen y Coed and Dan y Coed is a common characteristic of settlements in the south-west and a number of sites have been recognized from aerial photographs in which the outer ends of the corridor ditches splay out to create an outer enclosure. These *concentric antennae enclosures* (James 1990) are quite distinctive but what function the outer enclosure had is unclear. While it is possible they provide enclosed pastures or an enclosed cultivation zone it is equally possible that the defined zone had ritual significance as a kind of liminal area between the inside world of the home and the outside world of production. Similar concentric enclosures are found in north Wales (pp. 299–301).

The multiple enclosure banks of sites like Pen y Coed and Woodside Camp and the prominent positions of others like Coygan Camp are likely in some way to reflect on the status of the lineage occupying the enclosure. In this context Castell Henllys, Pembs., is of particular interest. Here a comparatively small enclosure sited at the end of a ridge was provided with unusually massive defences across the line of approach, with a very impressive gate and a chevaux de frise. Although a number of circular timber-built houses were found inside, not all were in use at any one time and the site is never likely to have housed more than one extended family. The implication of such elaborate defences, however, is that the site was one of élite status throughout the Iron Age.

Woodside



Dan Y Coed



0 50 100 metres

Figure 13.15 Woodside Camp and Dan y Coed enclosure, Dyfed (source: G. Williams 1988).

Few of the rath-like enclosures in Glamorganshire or Monmouthshire have been adequately excavated, with the notable exception of Mynydd Bychan, Glam., overlooking the Ewenny valley, where a small enclosure was found to contain a group of timber-framed circular huts, probably dating to the first century BC.

Rebuilding in stone took place in the middle of the first century AD (Figure 13.16). At Whitton, South Glam., a roughly rectangular ditched enclosure established in the early decades of the first century AD was provided with seven timber roundhouses of different dates. Romanization, in the form of rectangular timber buildings, becomes apparent at the end of the first century AD (Figure 13.16). Both sites are best regarded as single family farmsteads.

Many of the promontories of south-west Wales were defended by banks and ditches, turning them into the equivalent of the Cornish cliff castles (Figure 13.17). Several have been partially examined by excavation. On St David's Head, Pembs., a complex rampart protected a small group of six conjoined stone-walled huts 4.5 to 6.0 m in diameter, excavated in 1900. The material culture was sparse but whetstones, spindle whorls, hammer stones and fragments of iron were found together with a few glass beads and decorated shale pendants. No precise evidence of the date range of the settlement has come to light. An excavation on a closely similar promontory fort at Tower Point, St Brides, Pembs., has demonstrated a two-phase construction for the inner stone-faced rampart and has shown that here, too, huts were built within the protection of the rampart, but little cultural material was found and there was no direct evidence of date. Limited work at Llanstephan Castle, Carm., an inland promontory enclosure beneath the later medieval castle, has however produced a group of radiocarbon assessments indicating a date in the sixth century BC for an early phase in the occupation sequence. Trial excavation at Great Castle Head, Dale, Pembs., showed a similarly extended occupation, with an inner bank demonstrating three phases of construction during the Early and Middle Iron Age and a massive outer bank added in the Late Iron Age.

Further east several enclosed sites have now been partially examined by excavation. At the Knave, a promontory fort near Rhossili in Glamorganshire, two widely spread ramparts protected a cliff-top, the inner area of which was barely 46 m across. Pottery akin to South-Western Decorated Wares suggests a date in the second or first century BC but occupation could well have begun much earlier. The 0.1 ha promontory fort at Bishopston valley, Glam., produced pottery of similar date together with samian ware, showing that occupation continued into the Roman period, and at High Penard, Glam., a 0.8 ha promontory fort with widely spaced ramparts was examined, but yielded only Roman objects. Limited excavation at the Bulwarks, Porthkerry, Glam., a major promontory fort of some 4.1 ha, showed that here too occupation which began in the Iron Age continued into the Roman period.

Of the inland multiple-enclosure forts, Harding's Down West Fort on

the Gower peninsula, Glam., is the most extensively excavated. The main enclosure was small, only 0.6 ha, and strongly defended, but the outer compound, presumably for stock, more than doubled the size of the protected area. The approach to the main enclosure was made along a trackway which flanked the side of the annexe earthworks. The gate itself consisted of two pairs of posts 1.4 m apart which gave direct access to the enclosure, in which three house terraces could be recognized. Excavation of two of these has shown them to have been occupied by substantial timber-built houses. Artefacts were few, but pottery of Late Iron Age burnished type was found, together with an iron bloom. The evidence is therefore sufficient to suggest that the enclosure was probably occupied by a single family unit during the latter part of the Iron Age.

Finally, the excavation at Castle Ditches, Llancarfan, a small univallate hillfort, 5 km inland from the coast of the Vale of Glamorgan, revealed a complex structural history beginning with a small stone-walled enclosure which was later extended with an earth rampart and ditch to enclose about 2 ha. Internal occupation, when sampled against the rampart, proved to be intensive and produced a few sherds of South-Western Decorated Wares. Evidence of ironworking was apparent throughout the sequence.

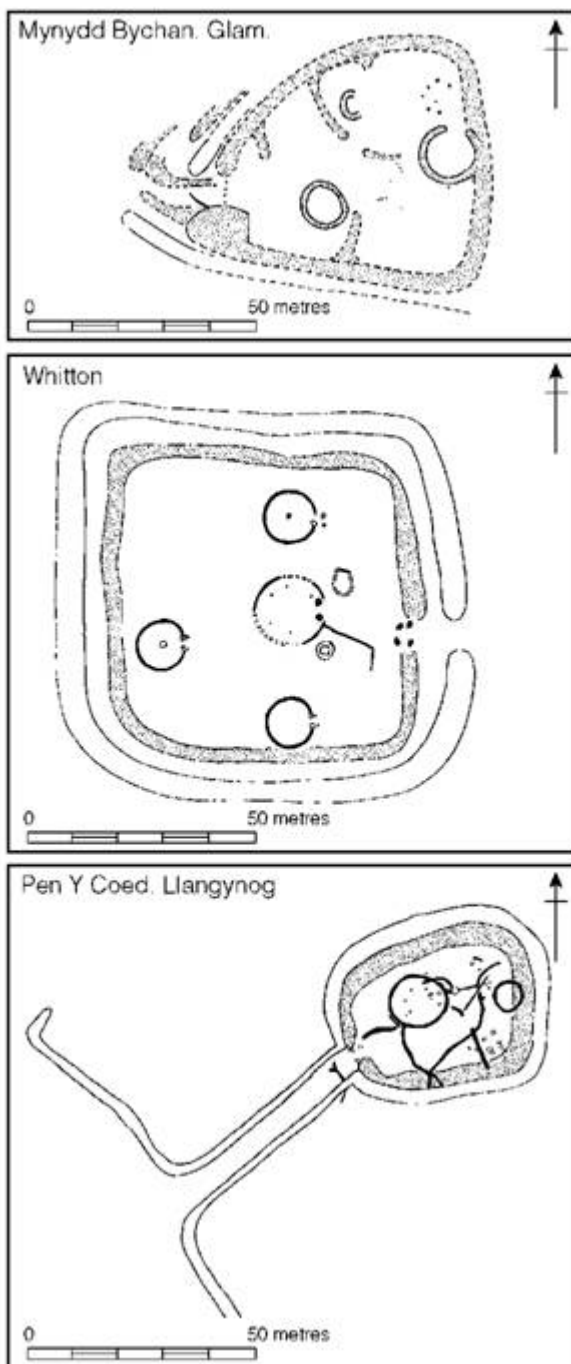


Figure 13.16 Welsh settlements (sources: Mynydd Bychan, Savory 1954, 1956; Whitton, Jarrett and Wrathmell 1981; Pen y Coed, Murphy 1985).

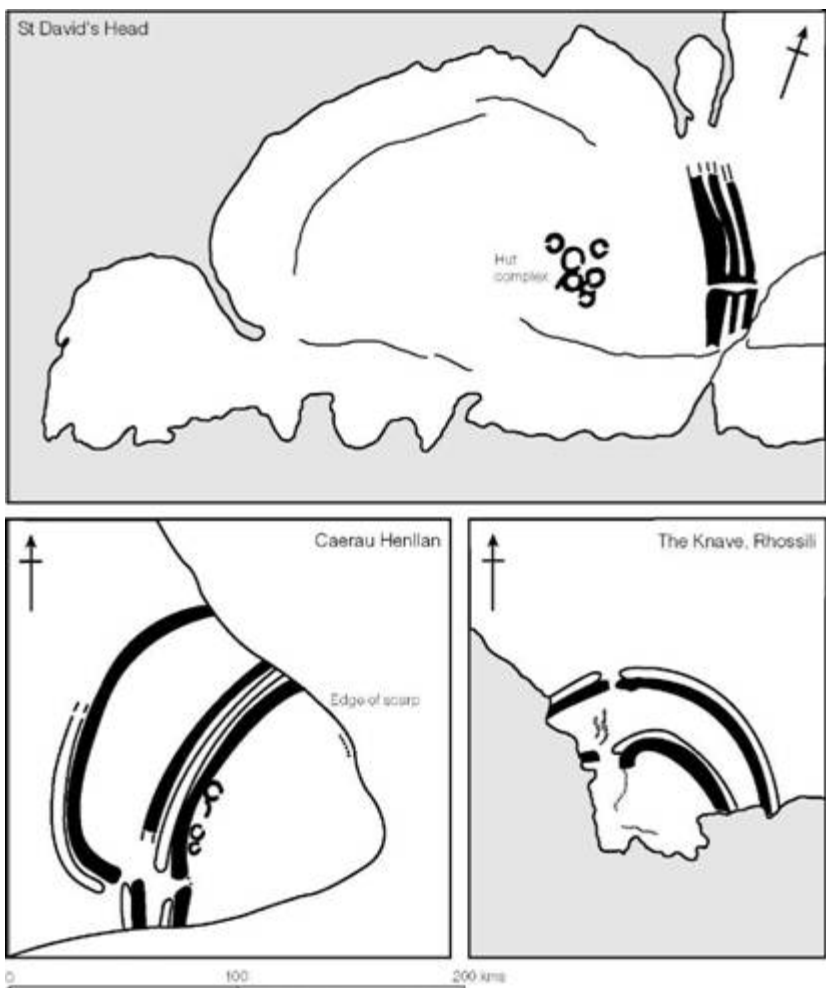


Figure 13.17 Welsh promontory forts (sources: *St David's Head*, Baring-Gould, Burnard and Enys 1899; *Caerau Henllan*, Ordnance Survey; *The Knave*, A. Williams 1939b).

From the above descriptions it is clear that the distinction between raths, promontory forts, univallate forts and multiple enclosures is blurred. The small promontory forts like the Knave and High Penard could strictly be classed as multiple-enclosure settlements modified to suit a promontory position, while the areas enclosed by many of them correspond to the areas of raths on inland sites. It is doubtful, therefore, whether the promontory forts should be regarded as economically or socially distinct from the other types of enclosure. It is simpler to suppose that most of them were merely variants of the multiple-enclosure and rath types.

In summary, it may be said that the settlement pattern and economy

of south and west Wales had much in common with Devon and Cornwall, the reason being chiefly that the climate and geomorphology of both areas encouraged the development of basically pastoral economies, which in turn directly influenced the nature of the social structure. The emphasis appears to have been on individually defended homesteads, sometimes large enough to house not only the owner and family but also a considerable entourage. The absence of large hillforts strongly suggests a lack of centralized government. Cattle rearing played an important part in the economy, the animals no doubt serving as a manifestation of wealth which could be treated as currency. In the more mountainous regions sheep may have been more significant but positive evidence is at present lacking. The relative importance of cereal-growing is uncertain: querns are not uncommon but no extensive traces of Celtic field patterns have been recognized in the area, although cereal grains have been recovered from Caer Cadwgan and Pembry Mountain. At present, all that can be said is that limited corn growing was practised but in many areas may have been subservient to animal husbandry.

North Wales

The study of the settlement pattern of north Wales is made difficult by the almost total absence of dating evidence from the many excavated sites, but the high quality of the fieldwork carried out, particularly in Caernarvonshire, makes it possible to describe in some detail the basic settlement forms belonging to the pre-Roman Iron Age (Smith 2001).

Discussion must begin with the small multivallate enclosure of Castell Odo near Aberdaron, Caerns. ([Figure 13.18](#)), where as a result of extensive excavation a development sequence can be recognized, beginning with an open settlement composed of several circular timber houses associated with a small quantity of pottery similar in some forms to southern British assemblages dating to the fifth or fourth century. At some stage, while the huts were in use, work began on the construction of a timber palisade, but it appears never to have been completed – a fact which might be linked to the destruction of one of the houses by fire. In the third phase the settlement was enclosed by a bank of earth surrounding an area approximately 76 m across, in which were built several circular huts of stone. Later still the bank was revetted back and front with dry- stone walling and a new, similarly constructed bank was erected inside it, leaving a space of about 12 m between the two. Finally, possibly as the result of the Roman invasion, the defences were slighted and circular stone houses were built over them.

In terms of size and social structure, Castell Odo compares closely

with the raths of southwest Wales. In all probability, it developed as the homestead of the local chieftain's family, providing perhaps some protected accommodation for dependants within the enclosure. The intervallum space created later could well have served as a safe corral for stock, functioning in much the same way as the multiple-enclosure forts of the south-west. Elsewhere in north Wales this type of small defended settlement is by no means uncommon; several are found in the Aber-daron peninsula and along the coastal strip. Further inland at Dinas Emrys, Caerns., traces of a fenced settlement, possibly of similar type, have been recognized.

A rather different form of settlement is represented by the rectangular earthwork of Bryn Eryr, Anglesey, which has been extensively excavated and thoroughly published and therefore serves as a convenient type-site. Occupation began in the Early Iron Age with a single clay-walled roundhouse set within a timber stockade, but later, in the fourth or third century BC, a second circular building was attached to the first and the settlement was enclosed by a new rectilinear perimeter composed of a bank with an external ditch. Within the enclosure several rectangular 'granaries' were constructed and there is evidence in the form of quernstone and grain of a well-developed agricultural economy. The settlement continued in use well into the Roman period. Bryn Eryr is morphologically comparable to a number of other enclosures found on Anglesey and on the adjacent mainland (Longley 1998, figures 1 and 21) and appears to represent a distinct category of homesteads, possibly of élite status. They are closely similar to the enclosures, characterized by Whitton, found in south Wales. It is tempting to suggest that rectangularity was deliberately chosen in both regions as a symbol of the status of the occupying lineage.

Castell Odo, Caerns

Llwyn Du Bach, Caerns

Bryn Y Castell

Bryn Eryr

Crawcwellt

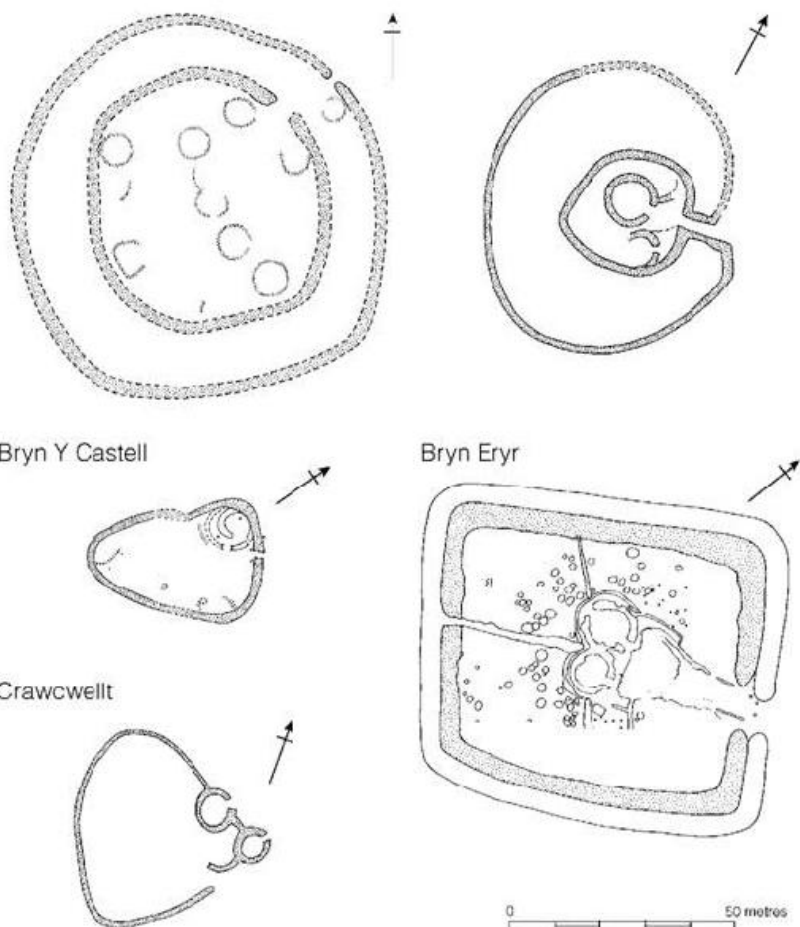


Figure 13.18 Settlements from north Wales (sources: Castell Odo, Alcock 1961; Llwyn du Bach, Bersu and Griffith 1949; Bryn y Castell, Crew 1985; Crawcwellt, Crew 1998; Bryn Eryr, Longley 1998).

A third class of enclosed homesteads, generally known as *concentric circle sites*, has been recognized in Caernarvonshire. These are comparable to the *concentric antennae enclosures* of the south-west. A typical example, Llwyn du Bach, consists of a circular stone-built hut 9 m across, with two concentric enclosing walls 26 and 60 m in diameter (Figure 13.18). No indication of dating was found, but it has been suggested (Hogg 1966) that concentric circle sites belong to the pre-Roman Iron Age and may have formed the prototype from which some at least of the native Roman Iron Age enclosures developed.

A fourth type of settlement is simple stone-walled enclosures of

varying forms, well typified by the large-scale excavation of Bryn y Castell in Snowdonia (Figure 13.18). Here the roughly pear-shaped enclosed area measured only 40 by 25 m and consisted of a cobbled yard with a single circular house in one corner. The economic basis of the community who used this exposed site is unclear but it is evident from a considerable mass of debris and several structures that the smelting and forging of iron was an important activity. Dating evidence would suggest occupation beginning in the first century BC and continuing to the first century AD. A closely comparable upland site was carefully excavated at Crawcwellt West, Merioneth (Figure 13.18). Here the settlement began c. 300 BC with a group of circular houses built in timber with stake-walls. These were later reconstructed with stone foundations, with occupation continuing into the first century AD. In both phases the buildings were associated with iron-smelting during the course of which large slag dumps accumulated downhill of the settlement area. It was estimated that during the life of the settlement about half a tonne of fully refined bar iron would have been produced.

A fifth type of settlement has been called the *enclosed group* (Gresham 1973). These can be defined as consisting of two or more separate huts situated close enough to each other to be considered as part of the same social unit. The individual huts are often linked by walls and are usually associated with a small field system composed of separate cultivation plots edged with boulders cleared from their surfaces. In general appearance they closely resemble the Dartmoor settlements described above (pp. 276–9). A detailed field survey in the Cwm Ystradllyn district of southern Caernarvonshire has brought to light a large number of such settlements which tend to cluster on the gentle mountain slopes around the 300 m contour. The one excavated site, Braich y Cornel, has produced no dating evidence, but it may well pre-date the Roman occupation.

Many other types of enclosed settlement are known in north Wales and have been discussed from time to time (Gresham 1973; Hogg 1966; C.A. Smith 1974, 1978b; G. Smith 2001), but many if not most of these are likely to be of Roman date, at least in their final form.

One of the most dramatic aspects of the north Welsh settlement pattern is the development of large hill-top settlements defended by stone walls. The evidence from the Caernarvonshire forts of Garn Boduan, Tre'r Ceiri and Conway Mountain (Figures 13.19 and 13.20) shows that many of them were occupied by sizeable communities of between 100 and 400 people living in circular, but largely undated, stone-walled huts, there being some twenty to eighty huts in each settlement. Normally the huts were totally enclosed by dry-stone ramparts, but occasionally, as at Garn Fadrun, Caerns., a considerable

part of the settlement lay on the surrounding slopes. Further east at Dinorben, Denbigh., a settlement of comparable size was recognized, but in this case the huts were of timber and some at least pre-dated the construction of the hillfort.

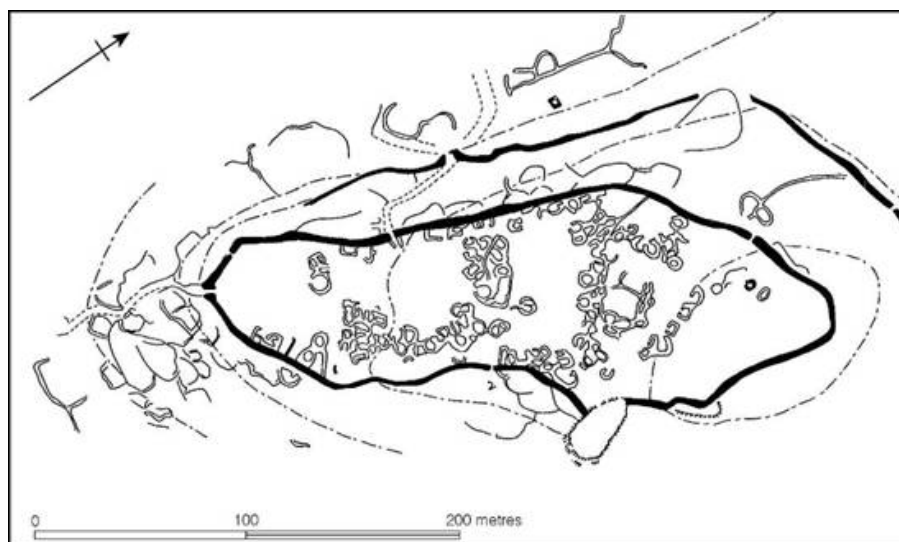


Figure 13.19 *Plan of Tre'r Ceiri, Gwynedd (source: Hogg 1962).*

The Welsh Borderland

The wide strip of countryside west of the Dee–Severn axis, extending into the foothills of the Welsh mountains, has produced abundant evidence of pre-Roman Iron Age occupation, but mostly from the excavation of large hillforts which have tended to attract the attention of archaeologists at the expense of smaller settlements. Settlements are, however, becoming increasingly well known, particularly in the upper reaches of the Severn and the foothills of the Berwyn Mountains where enclosures of less than 1.2 ha abound, as they do between the Wye and Usk in the south (Spurgeon 1972).

In the Upper Severn valley between Montgomery and Oswestry many settlements have been discovered almost entirely as the result of systematic aerial survey (Whimster 1989; Gibson 1999). The enclosures can be broadly classified into curvilinear, rectilinear and hybrid. That the great majority of them have been ploughed out reflects their siting on good agricultural land. One of these sites at Collfryn, 10 km north of Welshpool, has been extensively excavated (Figure 13.21). The settlement began life as an unenclosed settlement, but some time around 300 BC a triple-ditched enclosure was created

with widely spaced ditches. At this stage it covered an area of about 2.5 ha, but some time later, probably in the first century BC, the area was reduced by recutting the original inner ditch and cutting a new ditch immediately within it. Throughout most of the period the settlement seems to have comprised three or four timber- built roundhouses and a number of four-post granaries and would probably therefore have supported a single extended family. The economy was based on animal husbandry and crop production, including wheat, barley and oats, and the inhabitants had access to salt from Cheshire. The rich and varied soils of the Severn valley would have been ideal for mixed farming regimes. The status of the lineage occupying Collfryn is difficult to judge, but the multiple enclosure earthwork might be thought to indicate an élite status.

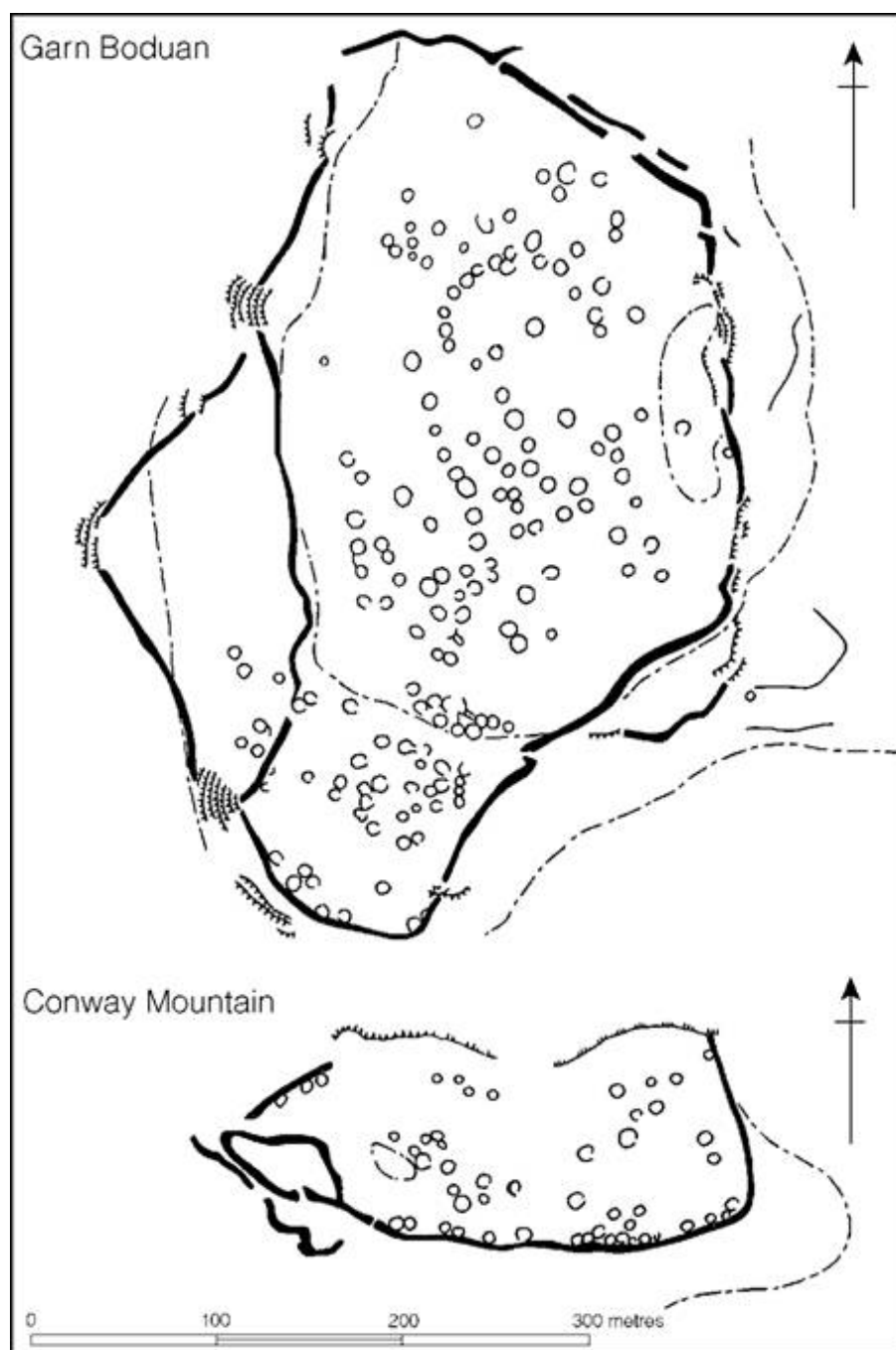


Figure 13.20 Plans of two north Welsh hillforts (sources: Garn Boduan, Hogg 1962; Conway Mountain, Griffiths and Hogg 1957).

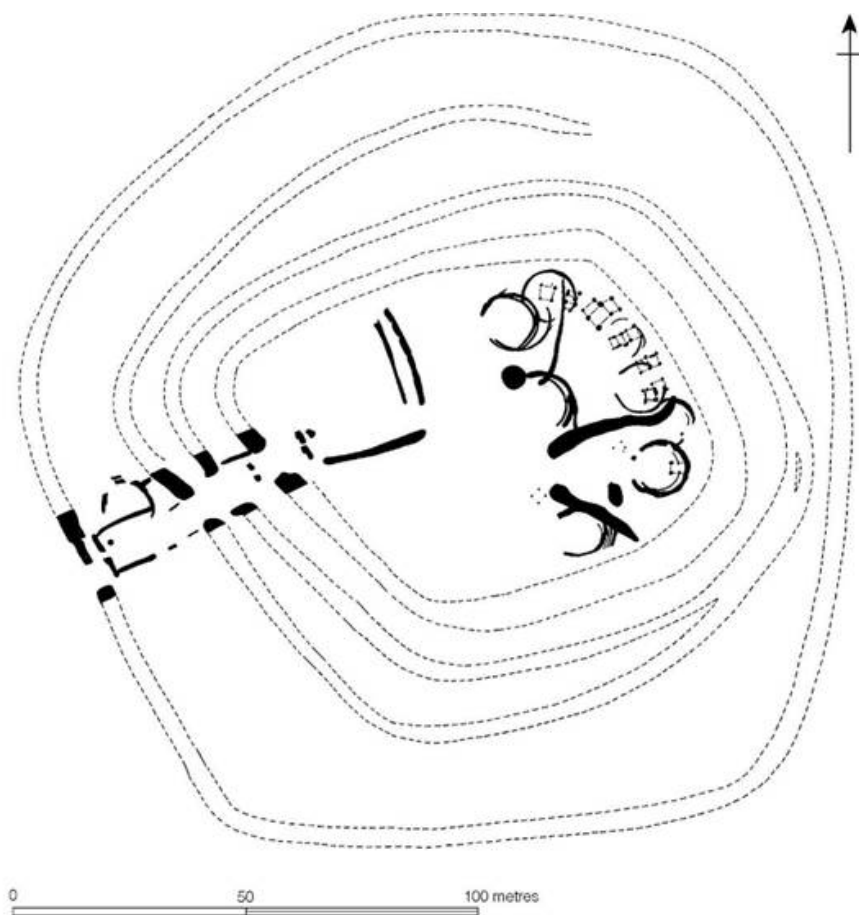


Figure 13.21 Collfryn, Powys (source: Britnell 1989).

Of the excavated hillforts, several show signs of rebuilding and extensive occupation over a considerable period of time, and in the southern part of the area at least, many of the basic elements of the south-eastern economy are found.

The west: a summary

Much of the region we have designated as the west of Britain has, in recent years, been subjected to an intensity of archaeological survey quite unparalleled anywhere else in the country. As a result very large numbers of Iron Age settlements have been identified, showing that in many parts of the region the density of occupation must have been very considerable.

In the eastern part of the region – the Welsh Borderland – the presence of large hillforts suggests that the socio-political system may

have been similar to other hillfort-dominated parts of central southern Britain, but in the far west, the Atlantic-facing communities inhabiting the peninsulas of Devon and Cornwall, south-west Wales and north-west Wales developed a very different system based on the single homestead without recourse to larger and more complex structures. Within the general category of 'homestead' there are a variety of forms, but all seem to have been of single or extended family size and it was the general rule that the settlement should be defined in some way, by a palisade, a bank, a ditch or these boundaries in combination. That some adopted multiple boundaries and some chose more prominent locations or constructed massive banks is most likely to be an expression of the different status of the lineages. There is nothing unreasonable in supposing that in the Iron Age, as we know to have been the case in the Saxon period, physical aspects of the settlement were closely related to grades of status. In such a system the social ranking of a family would have been displayed by readily identifiable features such as multiple lines of enclosure, height of bank, presence of gate tower, etc. Thus in the archaeology of settlement form may lie evidence of social structure.

Another factor which seems to be shared by all areas where good excavated evidence is available is the increase in the number and permanence of settlements in the Middle Iron Age. Once established, occupation usually continued for centuries, lasting in many areas well into the Roman period. This longevity of occupation argues for a degree of social and political stability, in marked contrast to the south-east where quite dramatic dislocations are evident. The persistence of established settlements along the Atlantic-facing zone from around 400–300 BC may, at least in part, be the result of the self-contained nature of each farmstead able, from the variety of resources within its reach, to provide for itself without recourse to external support. In this self-sufficiency may lie the reason why the material culture of the region is far more limited in its variety than that of the contemporary south-east.

14

Settlement and the settlement pattern in the centre and north

Any cognitive geography that attempts to divide a land mass into regions is bound, to some extent, to be forced into arbitrary decisions. Strict use of geomorphology is one approach. If we had adopted this rigorously, then the logic would have been to take the Jurassic scarp as one boundary and the Welsh Borderland as another, leaving what used to be called in the old geography books 'The Midland Triangle' as part of the *centre* but including the Yorkshire Wolds and Tabular Hills in the *south*. Another approach might have been to adopt the divisions so elegantly argued by the historical geographers Brian Roberts and Stuart Wrathwell in *Region and Place* (2002), but their entirely convincing regionalization is determined to a significant extent by developments in the second millennium AD and to adopt it for the first millennium BC would be anachronistic. The divide adopted here is something of a compromise, resting partly on geomorphology and partly on an appreciation of the archaeological evidence, with the *centre* beginning at a line roughly coincident with the Dee valley, the northern edge of the Trent basin and the Humber.

To the north of this line the centre and north of Britain have for convenience been divided into three broad zones: the Pennines and central Britain; the Tees–Forth region; and western Scotland and the Western and Northern Isles. Needless to say, each of these zones is capable of subdivision into many different regions.

The Pennines and central Britain

The north of England is geomorphologically varied and is best considered as a number of distinct sub-zones. Through the centre runs the backbone of the Pennines, composed largely of Carboniferous limestone and Millstone grit capped with large tracts of moorland, even today creating a real barrier between the two faces of northern England. East of the divide the landscape falls naturally into three sub-zones. To the south are the chalk Wolds and the limestone Moors divided from each other by the Vale of Pickering, which is itself part

of an extensive tract of lowlands drained by the river system of the Ouse and Swale serving to separate the calcareous massifs of the east from the Pennine ridge. West of the Pennines the Lake District massif forms a major barrier between the coastal plain of Cheshire and Lancashire and the lowlands drained by the rivers flowing to the Solway Firth. Variation in climate, geology and altitude serve to create a palimpsest of micro-environments, while mountain ridges and wide river flood plains present barriers to easy communication. It is hardly surprising therefore that the settlement potential of each region has imposed its stamp on settlement pattern.

For a long while knowledge of Iron Age settlement was confined to evidence from a few well-excavated sites. More recently, however, not only has the number of excavations increased but a series of regional and general surveys have been prepared. Among the more important may be listed three overviews of the available pollen sequences which allow the framework of localized environmental change to be sketched out (Turner 1981; Wilson 1983; Simmons *et al.* 1990; Simmons 1995), and a series of regional surveys including the Wolds (Ramm 1980; Stoertz 1997), the North York Moors (Spratt 1982) and the Pennine Dales and the Aire–Wharfe drainage system (West Yorks CC 1981). The whole of the north-east region has been thoroughly reviewed by Haselgrove (1984a, 1999). No comparable surveys are yet available for the far less well-known zone west of the Pennines. In the pages to follow, the better-recorded settlements will be briefly discussed.

The Yorkshire Wolds

The best known of the Yorkshire Wold settlements is the site of Staple Howe, situated on a chalk hillock overlooking the Vale of Pickering (Figure 14.1). Here a farmstead dating to the seventh to fifth centuries has been substantially excavated, revealing an oval palisaded enclosure, subsequently remodelled, containing several huts and a massively constructed five-post rectangular granary. The excavator has suggested that in the first phase the only hut in use was an oval structure which was subsequently replaced by two circular huts. While the circular huts are of generalized type similar to those found over most of southern Britain, the oval hut is more unusual: its roof appears to have been constructed around a horizontal ridge-post supported on two verticals, while the lower ends of the rafters would have rested on the ground or upon dwarf walls constructed of turf or chalk. In addition to large quantities of pottery and a range of imported bronze objects referred to below (p. 458), the surviving material remains included masses of animal bones, principally of cattle, sheep and swine, together with an amount of carbonized grain,

all of which proved to be club wheat (*Triticum compactum*).

The same general pattern of economy is reflected in the evidence from the hillfort of Grimthorpe, which occupies a somewhat similar position on the west edge of the Yorkshire Wolds, overlooking a low-lying area of densely wooded Keuper marl. Within the defences of the fort were found eight four-post granaries, emphasizing the importance of cereal growing. The animal bones showed a preponderance of cattle – 55 per cent compared with 25 per cent sheep; pigs (7.8 per cent) were only a little more plentiful than horses (7.3 per cent). If these figures are corrected for actual meat yield, beef consumption would be seen to amount to about 82.4 per cent of the total meat intake. A more detailed examination of the cattle bones shows that more than 70 per cent of the herd was maintained over two winters before eventual slaughter. Sheep, on the other hand, were killed off at a constant rate. The implications are clear enough: the economy was sufficiently stable for extensive over-wintering, a fact which in itself adds support to the view that corn growing, producing straw fodder, played a significant part in balancing the complex processes of food production. Clearly, then, mixed farming was practised – indeed, there is very little difference between the socio-economic basis of Staple Howe and Grimthorpe and that of a typical Wessex farm, except for the absence of querns and storage pits. Since, however, storage pits were rare or unknown among the southern sites before the fifth century BC, their absence from the early Yorkshire sites is hardly surprising. The lack of querns is a little puzzling, but this may be nothing more than an accident of survival.

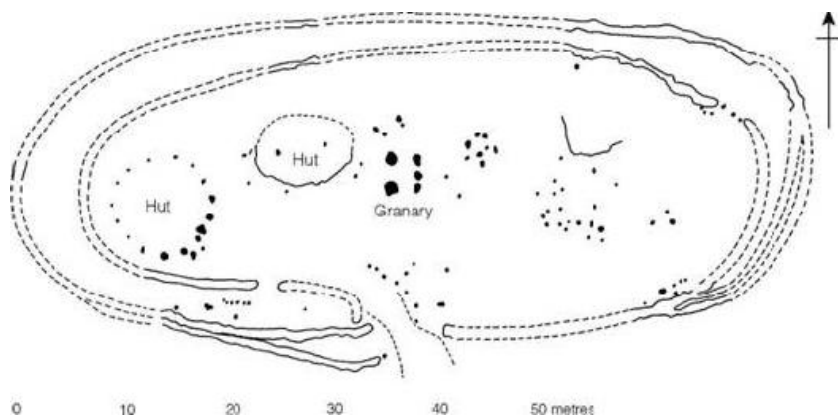


Figure 14.1 Staple Howe, Yorks. (source: Brewster 1963).

Staple Howe, Grimthorpe and Thwing belong to the first half of the

first millennium BC and it was probably in this period that the linear ditch systems which traverse the Wolds were constructed (Ramm 1978; Manby 1980; Stoertz 1997). These boundaries are similar in form and date to those found in Wessex and on the North York Moors, and presumably reflect a need to demarcate social territories possibly associated with grazing rights. A very clear example of the relationship between linear boundaries and settlement is provided by a study of part of the northern scarp of the Wolds, where the two enclosed settlements of Staple Howe and Devil's Hill situated prominently on the chalk scarp slope overlook the open settlement of Heslerton (Powlesland 1988) (Figure 14.2). Heslerton comprised at least seven roundhouses, enclosures and four-post 'granaries' and appears to have been occupied for several centuries. Though the exact contemporaneity of the three sites has still to be convincingly argued, their apparent relationship to boundaries formed by linear earthworks and pit alignments argues for a high degree of social organization.

Some indication of the developing settlement pattern in the valleys is provided by an extensive and straggling settlement excavated at Garton and Wetwang Slack. The settlement consisted of a number of circular houses 9 to 12 m in diameter, built of timbers placed in bedding trenches. The discovery of carbonized grain, grain storage pits, often within the houses, and four- and six- post granaries, is a fair indication that cereal growing played an important part in the economy. A date in the fifth/fourth century is indicated by a single radiocarbon date. By the third and second centuries changes were taking place. The straggling settlement was now replaced by a nucleated settlement with associated fields, while an extensive cemetery was allowed to develop along the valley road. The cemetery was carefully defined by a linear earthwork. A little later, in the first century, ditched enclosures, possibly for animals, were added.

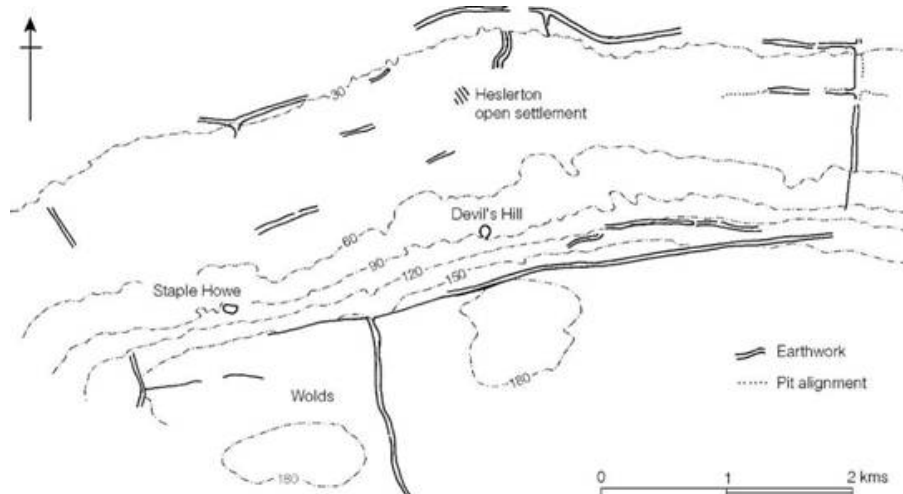


Figure 14.2 *Boundary systems on the north scarp of the Yorkshire Wolds (source: Powlesland 1988).*

The type of linear settlement so vividly demonstrated by the excavation of Garton and Wetwang seems to have been widespread in the Wolds, where they are usually referred to as droveways or ladder settlements and are known largely from air photographs. A typical settlement of this kind usually has ditched enclosures running for up to a kilometre along a droveway, with field systems defined by ditches beyond. Settlements of this kind have been examined at Rudston, North Cave and Brantingham.

The settlement pattern on the Wolds, together with the extensive evidence for burial practice (pp. 546–50), is now beginning to allow broader discussion of the relationship of the living and the dead within the landscape. The Yorkshire Wolds are unique in providing such a range of data (Bevan 1997, 1999).

The North York Moors

The Moors are essentially an upland zone fringed with lower-lying areas of better-quality soil. The upland areas were divided into great tracts of pasture land by natural features enhanced by a series of linear earthworks and by pit alignments (Spratt 1982; Vyner 1995), suggesting a predominantly pastoral use formalized in the early first millennium BC and presumably continuing throughout the Iron Age. However, the distribution of beehive querns, an artefact of the first century BC and first century AD, which corresponds precisely to the distribution of good arable land, suggests that by the first century BC the agrarian base of the economy was becoming well established

(Hayes, Hemingway and Spratt 1980). Settlements are not well known but sub-rectangular or D-shaped enclosures containing circular houses have been recorded at Great Ayton Moor, Levisham Moor and Roxby (Spratt 1990, 142–54).

The Pennines and the west Pennine fringes

West of the Vale of York lie the Pennines, offering three basic environments to potential settlers: the upland limestone areas of Derbyshire and the Yorkshire Dales, the acid ill-drained moors of the coal measures and millstone grit, and the wide valleys floored with glacial drift which dissect the range. Little is known of the area in the pre-Roman Iron Age, but several large hillforts are recorded. At Castle Hill (Almondbury), Yorks. (Figure 14.3), overlooking the valley of the Holme, substantial annexes were added close to the main entrance of the fort, and later an outer series of banks and ditches were constructed to enclose the annexes and the original fort together with a considerable hectareage of protected pasture. Such an arrangement, which has parallels in the Welsh borderland and Wessex, strongly suggests the increasing importance of livestock, which needed protection.

The limestone hills and valleys between the rivers Wharfe and Greta, where intensive field-work has been carried out, were densely settled (Raistrick 1939; White 1988) and there is no reason to suppose that other limestone areas were any less thickly inhabited (Figure 14.4). Three types of settlement have been defined, the most common being the isolated hut, or sometimes a pair, set in a small embanked enclosure with a field or two nearby. This type is found mainly on the limestone plateau. The second type of settlement is the larger nucleation of huts which might reasonably be referred to as a village. One of the best-known examples, at Grassington in Wharfedale, consists of about 0.8 ha of huts and enclosures associated with about 33 ha of rectangular fields. The third type of site is the inhabited cave, quite often with a group of small fields laid out close by. The nature of the economy seen through the material culture is clear enough: grain was grown but in relatively small quantities, the principal food-sources being meat and milk from the flocks and herds. The relative percentages of cattle and sheep are uncertain, but the equipment of spinning and weaving occurs in quantity and the limestone pastures would have been far better suited to sheep than to cows.

Although most of the sites in the area are difficult to date and a number were occupied throughout the Roman period, it is highly likely that many of them began earlier. Indeed, in all probability the Roman settlement pattern closely reflected that of the preceding period. It cannot, however, be demonstrated that there were no

substantial changes in the economic system consequent upon the Conquest. All that can be safely said at present is that the land supported a considerable population who, by the Roman period at least, were cultivating fields as well as maintaining flocks and herds. Until the large-scale excavation of some of the settlements has been undertaken, further conclusions are impossible.

The general absence of hillforts in the northern Pennines, with the exception of Ingleborough, Yorks., is notable. Presumably the pastoral emphasis of the economy prevented the development of politically cohesive tribes requiring defended foci. The dissected nature of the landscape would also encourage the isolation of smaller groups.

The Magnesian limestone hills provide an environment more congenial to an agrarian-based economy and aerial photography is beginning to show something of the complexity of the ancient landscape with its trackways, linear boundaries and extensive field systems (Riley 1976, 1977, 1978; Chadwick 1999). Two settlement sites of considerable significance have been examined. At Ledston, Yorks., the part of the site excavated produced concentrations of rectangular storage pits, four-post 'storage' structures and circular buildings associated with beehive querns and weaving combs, while at Dalton Parlours, Yorks. ([Figure 14.5](#)), an agglomeration of ditched enclosures was found, several of them containing circular houses, four-post structures and rectangular storage pits. The radiocarbon dates suggest that the occupation spanned the period from the fourth to second centuries but pottery hints at a continuity of use until the late first century AD. A considerable number of querns and the animal bones recovered reflect a balanced mixed economy. Both Ledston and Dalton Parlours share most of the characteristics of the farming settlements of the south.

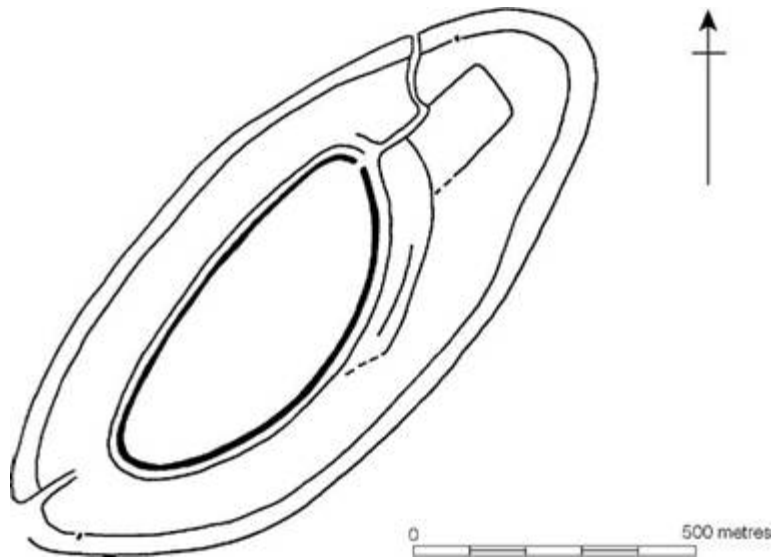


Figure 14.3 *Castle Hill, Almondbury, Yorks. (source: Varley 1976).*

West of the Pennines

The large tract of lowland between the Pennines and the Irish Sea – the Lancashire and Cheshire plain – is not yet well known archaeologically, but around the upland fringes and along the mid-Cheshire ridge there is a scattering of hillforts in use in the Early Iron Age but not, apparently, after the fourth century BC. Across the lowlands a number of enclosures are now coming to light (Matthews 1999, 2002) but published detail is still sparse.

The Tees–Forth region

The settlement pattern of the eastern part of northern Britain, centred upon the Tees–Forth region but extending to the north and south of it, is well known as the result of intensive field- work (Jobey 1962b, 1965, 1966a, 1966b, 1971a, 1971b; RCHM(S) *Peeblesshire, Argyll and Roxburghshire*; Haselgrove 1982; MacInnes 1982; Ralston, Sabine and Watt 1983), backed up by limited but carefully planned excavation. Most of the known sites now lie in the foothills of the main mountain ranges, on marginal land which has escaped recent ploughing, but aerial photography is showing that occupation extended on to the richer boulder clays of the lowlands, where all surface indications have long since disappeared (Haselgrove 1982). In addition to the settlement data a number of overviews of other aspects of Iron Age culture have been published – on crop regimes (van der

Veen 1992), pottery (Evans 1995, Willis 1999) and quernstones (Gwilt and Heslop 1995) – all adding to our understanding of life in the region. Broader discussions offering an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the available database include those by Hingley (1992), Haselgrove (1999), Willis (1999) and Armit (1999).

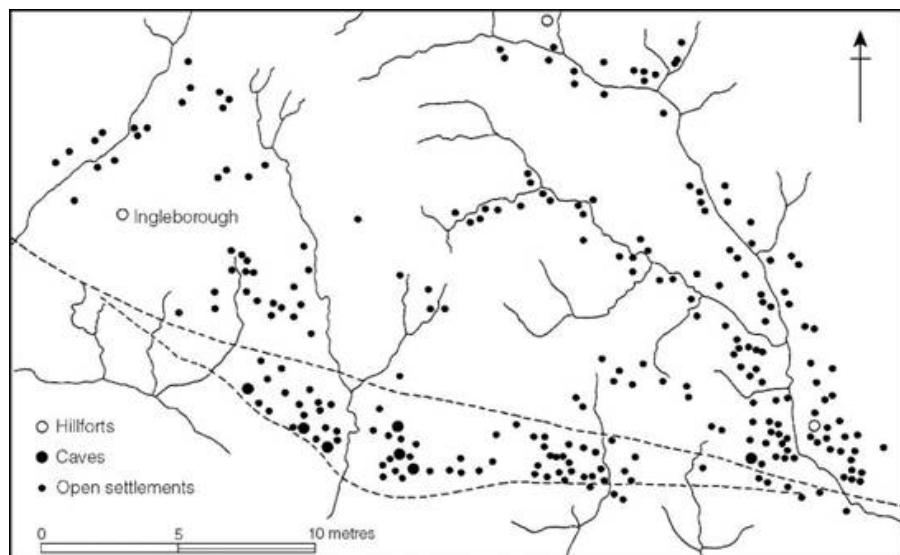


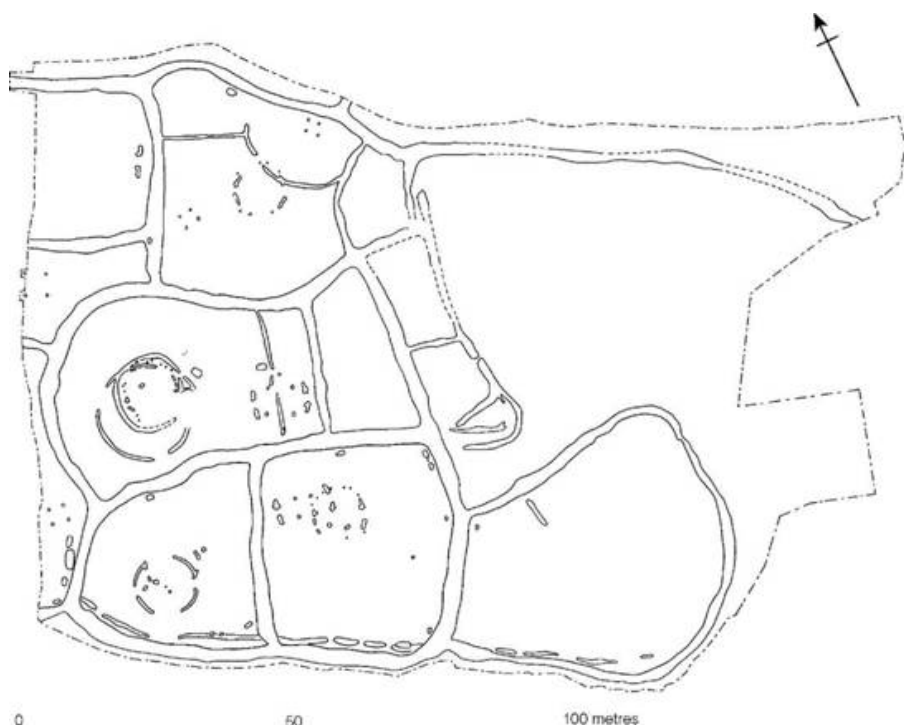
Figure 14.4 *Distribution of settlements in the Wharfedale area of Yorkshire. The broken lines represent geological fault lines with limestone to the north (source: Raistrick 1939).*

The earliest first-millennium BC settlements to be identified are the unenclosed groups of circular houses which now survive in upland areas beyond the limits of present-day agriculture and up to about 380 m OD (Gates 1983; Jobey 1985), of which the best known is the settlement at Green Knowe, Peeblesshire. Such radiocarbon dating evidence as there is for unenclosed settlements suggests a span from the mid-second to mid-first millennium, one of the latest being Dryburn Bridge, East Lothian, where the settlement can be shown to post-date a palisaded enclosure, of the type described below, for which a date of c. 750 BC is suggested.

Surveys in the immediate environment of many of the Northumberland sites (Gates 1983) show them to be associated with clearance cairns and field walls, the latter occasionally lapped by minor lynchets caused by ploughing. The pollen evidence provides further support for the view that even the settlements at the highest altitudes were engaged in some agricultural activities, albeit on a

limited scale. These questions will be returned to in [chapter 16](#).

From the eighth century BC onwards, one of the commonest forms of settlement, numerous examples of which are now recorded, is the palisaded enclosure ([Figure 14.6](#)): a circular, oval or sub-rectangular area surrounded by a continuous palisade trench in which close-spaced vertical timbers were wedged. A variety of plans is known ([Figures 14.7–14.9](#)). At one of the largest of the sites, White Hill, Peebles., two concentric palisades were erected 6.1–15.2 m apart, the inner enclosing an area of 0.7 ha. Hayhope Knowe, Roxburgh. ([Figure 14.8](#)), follows much the same arrangement, the only difference being that here the inner palisade was double, while at Castle Hill (Horsburgh), Peebles., both inner and outer palisades were double. These examples were all provided with simple opposed entrances, but others are known with only one entrance. At the thoroughly excavated site of West Brandon, Co. Durham ([Figure 14.9](#)), the simple double palisade ended in four large gate-posts in the centre of one side, and at Harehope, Peebles. ([Figure 14.8](#)), a single central gate was provided in each of the two periods represented; in the second, however, it was flanked with substantial timber-built towers. Harehope is atypical in another way since the palisades, instead of being set in a rock-cut trench, were bedded in a shallow bank of soil and rubble. The method of construction is not unlike that practised in Late Bronze Age contexts in southern Britain.



Stylistically the palisaded settlements have parallels among early sites further south which belong to the eighth to fifth centuries. At Dryburn Bridge, E. Lothian, a series of radiocarbon dates suggest a construction date for the palisaded enclosure in the eighth century or even earlier. A radiocarbon date for charcoal from one of the palisade trenches at Huckhoe, Northumberland, indicated a date in the seventh or sixth century while the palisade at Burnswark has been dated to the sixth century. Clearly, then, the northern palisades are of the same broad date as those in the south. Some are, however, later. At Hayknowes Farm, Dumfries and Galloway, a palisaded enclosure dates to the third to first centuries BC while excavation at Tower Knowe, Northumberland, has suggested that these palisaded enclosures could have continued to have been built as late as the first century AD. A further point of similarity to the south is that some of the palisades were later rebuilt as earthwork-enclosed sites. A good example of such a refurbishing can be seen at West Brandon, where a ditch was dug outside the palisades, the rampart without revetment being piled up behind, sealing the original palisade trenches. At Huckhoe both the inner and outer lines of palisade, 15 m apart, were replaced by stone-faced ramparts, while at Castle Hill (Horsburgh) the two palisades were again echoed in later earthworks but enclosed a more restricted area. At Kennel Hall Knowe, Northumberland, the later earthwork enclosed a more considerable area than the earlier palisades.

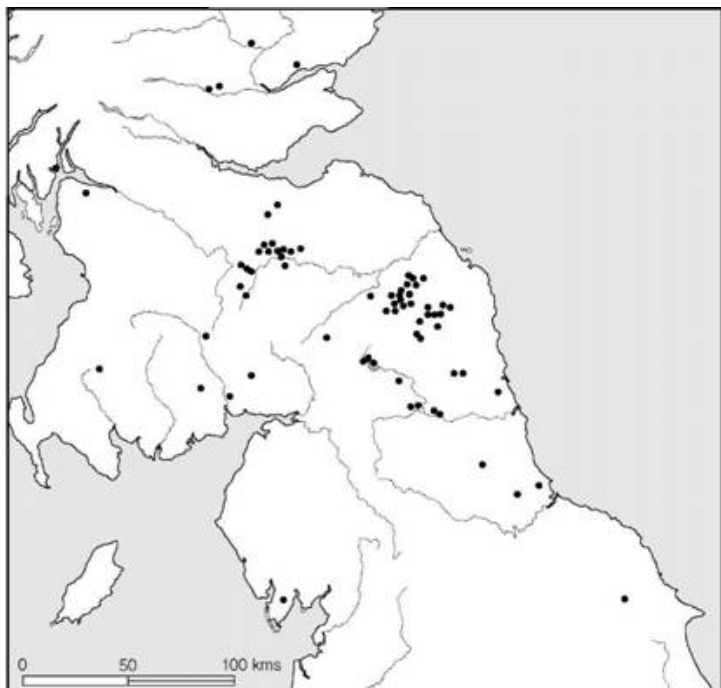


Figure 14.6 *Distribution of settlements defended by palisades (source: Ritchie 1970 with additions).*

The sequence, from palisade to earthwork can be shown to be *generally* secure, though in detail the situation is more complex (Hill 1982b; Armit 1999) and the change can no longer be assumed to represent a narrow chronological horizon. At Huckhoe the earthworks must have been built immediately after the destruction of the palisade by fire in the sixth century, but radiocarbon dates in the fourth century for Brough Law and the fourth to second centuries for Ingram Hill, both in Northumberland, show that not all the earthworks were as early, while at Kennel Hall Knowe radiocarbon dates for houses associated with the early palisades centre on the first century BC and first century AD. Here the earthwork phase is likely to be Roman.

West Plean, Stirling

High Knowes, Northumberland

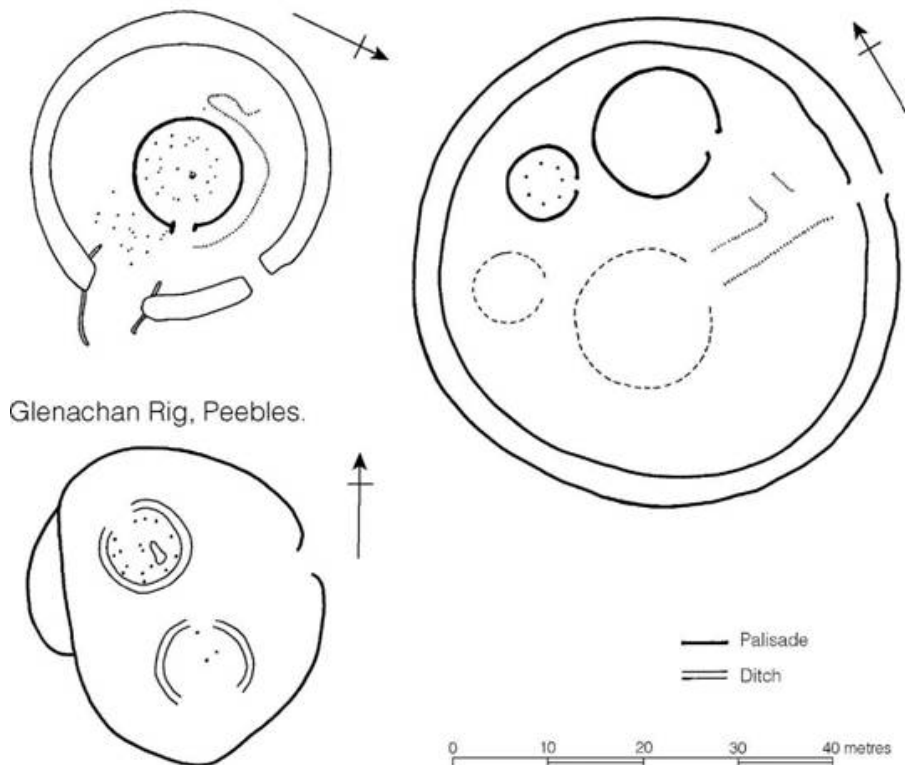
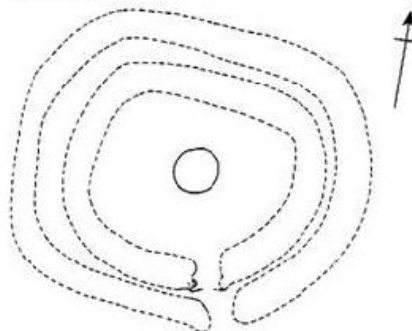


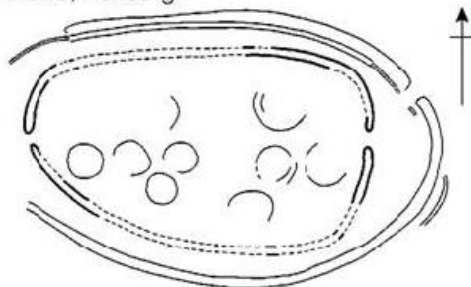
Figure 14.7 Comparative plans of palisaded enclosures (sources: West Plean, Steer 1958; High Knowes, Jobey and Tait 1966; Glenachan Rig, Feachem 1961).

A point worthy of emphasis is that many of the sites, both palisaded or earthwork-enclosed, were provided with multiple lines of defence, commonly though not invariably 15 m or so apart. While there can be no certainty on the matter, it is very tempting to see such an arrangement as the deliberate provision of protected corralling space for livestock, comparable with the multiple- enclosure forts of the south-west. Pastoral activities must have played a significant part in the economy but the general lack of faunal material renders any detailed assessment of the composition of flocks and herds difficult. Some quantification for sites in the Tees–Tyne region, however, showed cattle to predominate (Haselgrove 1982, 80). This is borne out by the assemblage from Thorpe Thewles, Cleveland.

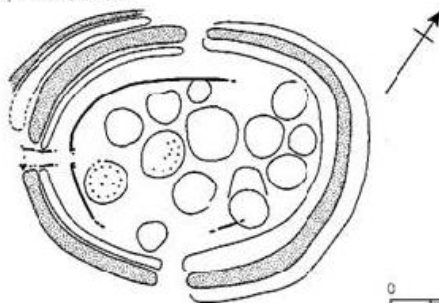
Harehope, Peebles.



Hayhope Knowe, Roxburgh



Braidwood, Midlothian

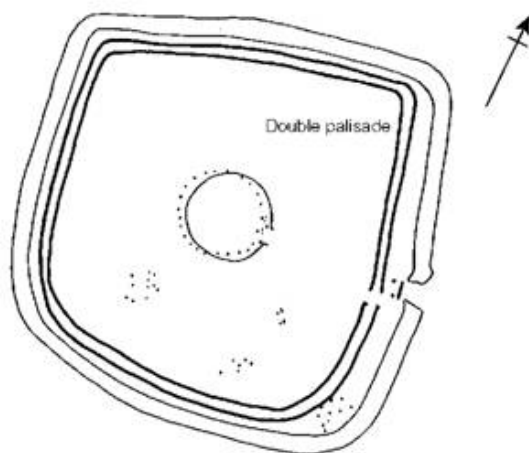


Palisade
Ditch
Bank

0 50 metres

Figure 14.8 Comparative plans of palisaded settlements (sources: Harehope, Feachem 1962; Hayhope Knowe, C.M. Piggott 1951; Braidwood, S. Piggott 1960).

West Brandon, Co. Durham



Burradon, Northumberland

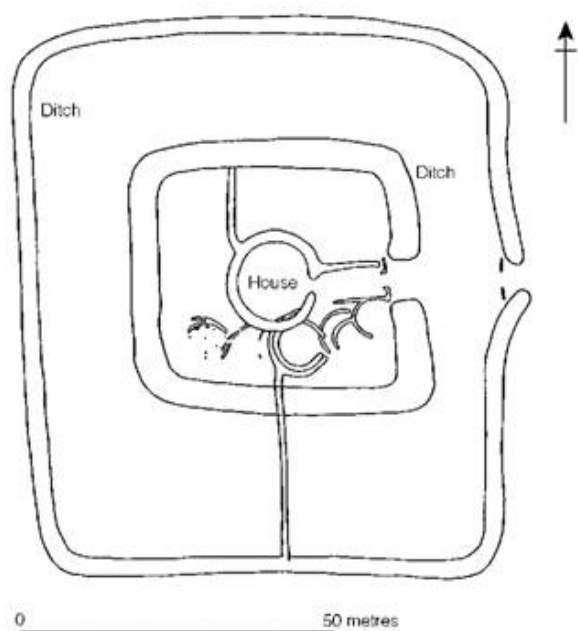


Figure 14.9 Comparative plans of rectangular enclosures (sources: West Brandon, Jobey 1962a; Burradon, Jobey 1970).

Cultivation was by no means neglected, as the four saddle querns from West Brandon and the rotary quern from Harehope show. Huckhoe has also provided evidence of what could be interpreted as a

four-post granary, but the storage pits and corn-drying hollows of the south are entirely lacking. However, environmental sampling at Coxhoe and Thorpe Thewles has produced carbonized remains of spelt, six-row hulled barley and probably emmer wheat, establishing the presence of a clear, but unquantifiable, arable component in the subsistence economy (van der Veen 1992).

The size of the settlements varies considerably from homesteads of one house like West Brandon to hamlets or even villages like the sixteen houses of Hayhope Knowe. Unless the house plans actually overlap, however, it is difficult to be sure how many phases of replacement were involved. This problem is clearly demonstrated by the excavation of the native settlement at Hartburn, Northumberland, where no fewer than thirty-six houses were discovered representing a minimum of twelve replacement phases. Quite possibly occupation was continuous from the middle of the first millennium to the second century AD.

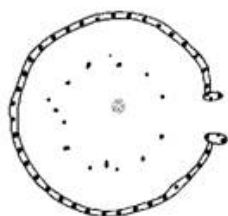
While the majority of settlements conform to homestead or hamlet type it is evident that the complex defences of some quite small sites distinguish them as settlements of high status. An example of such a site is Broxmouth hillfort, E. Lothian, substantially excavated in 1977–8. The enclosed area was small, less than 80 m across, but after an open phase there followed five successive phases of enclosure, each incorporating at least one aggrandized entrance. The contrast with the neighbouring settlement at Dryburn Bridge, only 3 km away, where a simple palisaded settlement was replaced by an open settlement, can best be explained as a difference of status. Status may also be reflected in a society's access to rare commodities. This is to some extent exemplified by the settlement at Thorpe Thewles, Cleveland. In the Middle Iron Age the settlement appears to have conformed to the local norm, with a roundhouse set within a rectangular ditched enclosure. In the later phase (first century BC–first century AD) the enclosure was replaced by a large open settlement of undefined extent which was in receipt of a range of luxury items including gold and silver, imported through the southern trade networks. The potential exists, therefore, to allow settlements in the Tees–Forth region to be ranked, but without a programme of large-scale excavation and a firm chronological framework it is unlikely to be realized.

Houses were invariably circular, ranging from about 6 to 15 m in diameter (Figure 14.10). The simplest were merely circular settings of posts like Harehope house 1 and the house which pre-dates the palisades at West Brandon. A slightly more complex arrangement occurs at Gle-nachan Rig, where a central post was provided to support the roof and the lower ends of the rafters were bedded in a shallow trench, thus providing some storage space behind the

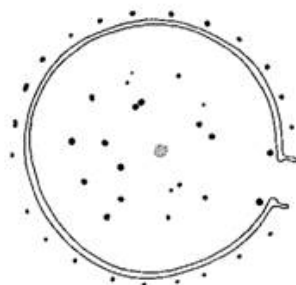
verticals. The earliest house in the palisaded enclosure at West Brandon is even more elaborate, with a roof taken on three concentric circles of posts, the outermost being 15 m in diameter. Beyond this is a further set of stake-holes, perhaps to tie down the roof-timbers, while the entrance passage seems to have been provided with double doors. In size and sophistication, the house rivals Little Woodbury, Wilts., and Pimperne Down, Dorset.

The earliest house at West Brandon was replaced by a structure of similar size, the outer wall of which was bedded in a continuous trench. Inside, a multiple setting of individual posts would have supported the main weight of the roof, while again an outer setting of stakes was provided, presumably as anchors for the rafters. A closely similar house was found at West Plean in period 2 – similar even to the extent of having the same type of short porch. The period 3 house at Harehope belonged to this general category but in this case it would appear that the outer wall was made of split timbers erected as a continuous wall rather than wattle infilling between individual posts.

West Plean, House 2



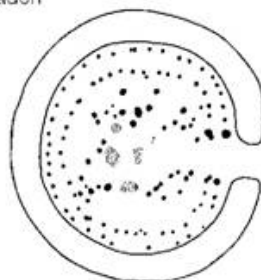
West Brandon, House B



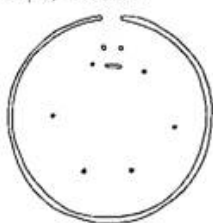
West Brandon, House A



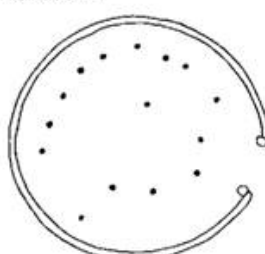
Burradon



Harehope, House 3



High Knowes A



Harehope, House 1



Harehope, House 2



Glenachan Rig



0 10 20 metres

Figure 14.10 Types of north British house plans (sources: West Plean, Steer 1958; West Brandon, Jobey 1962a; Burradon, Jobey 1970; Harehope, Feachem 1962; High Knowes, Jobey and Tait 1966; Glenachan Rig, Feachem 1961).

A variety of the circular house, commonly known as the 'ring ditch' house, is found only in Scotland. It is characterized by a central area separated usually by a timber ring or partition from a sunken

peripheral area which is sometimes paved. Examples have been excavated at Gle-nachan Rig, Harehope, Broxmouth, Dryburn Bridge and Douglasmuir and the type has been widely discussed (Hill 1982a, 12–21; 1984; Reynolds 1982; Reid 1989). No convincing reason has been put forward for the separation of the two zones but the possibility that the type may in some way be associated with the overwintering of cattle has much to commend it.

Turning now to the end of the Iron Age, one development, well represented among settlements discovered in Northumberland, is the appearance of stone-walled huts set in enclosures sometimes overlying the defences of hillforts (Figure 14.11). Such settlements are normally so sited as to make use of sheltered slopes, comfort being more important than defensive potential. Some regional differences are evident. In the Cheviot foothills the usual type of enclosure is circular, containing a number of huts fronting on to a sunken yard which is sometimes paved. Further south in Northumberland rectilinear plans prevail, the enclosures containing four or five round huts opening on to a pair of cobbled yards divided by a central pathway leading to the rear of the enclosure. The huts show no significant variation in size or complexity, suggesting little social differentiation, but in some areas larger settlements arise as the result of gradual growth and addition to a basic nucleus. Nucleation of this kind is not, however, common and the normal settlement unit remained throughout more appropriate to the family and the extended family than to more complex social groupings.

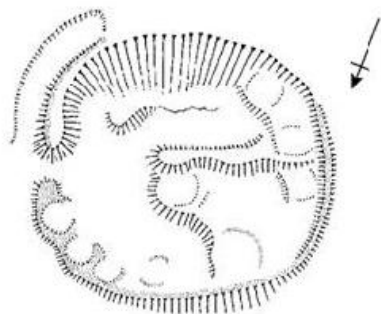
Dating evidence, where it exists, shows that many of the sites were occupied during the second century AD – a fact which, together with the rectangularity of the plans, has suggested direct Roman inspiration – but the discovery of a rectangular enclosed homestead at Burradon and others elsewhere in Northumberland (Figure 14.9), dating to the middle of the first millennium BC, shows that little can be based on plan alone. In all probability, enclosures with stone-walled huts developed out of the strong local tradition and may even have come into use before Roman interference in the area. There is often an element of continuity in choice of site between the small defended hillforts and the settlements: on some occasions the settlements actually overlies lengths of the disused defences. In such a case it is possible that a direct continuity of occupation took place. Elsewhere, the proximity of settlements to hillforts could be interpreted as a community moving to a more hospitable site nearby when need for defence was removed.

Another type of settlement, less well known, is the so-called ‘scooped enclosure’: a group of hut platforms terraced into the hillside and enclosed by a bank or wall (Figure 14.11). Dating is at present

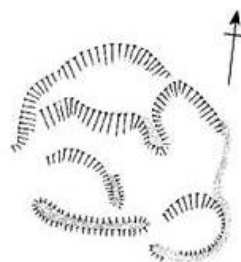
uncertain but typologically a Late Iron Age or early Roman context would seem to be most likely.

The replacement of palisades with earthworks has given many of the early homesteads and settlements the appearance of hillforts, but not only do most of them not exceed 1.2 ha in overall extent, the siting of many is clearly not defensive. For this reason, there is some uncertainty in the use of the term 'hillfort' in Scotland: many of the 1,500 or so recorded (at least three-quarters of them in the Tyne–Forth region) are no more than rampart-enclosed homesteads and settlements. To avoid confusion Feachem (1966) has used the term 'minor oppidum' to describe fortifications of a more massive size, 2.4–16.2 ha in extent, sited with an eye to the defensive possibilities of the land. These are far less numerous – some fifteen within the region under discussion. Many of them enclosed massive settlements: more than 500 houses within the 16.2 ha of Eildon Hill North, Roxburgh., and at least 130 within the 5.3 ha of Yeavering Bell, Northumberland (Ridout, Owen and Halpin 1992, 139–43).

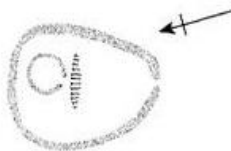
Coldsmouth Hill



Elsdon Burn



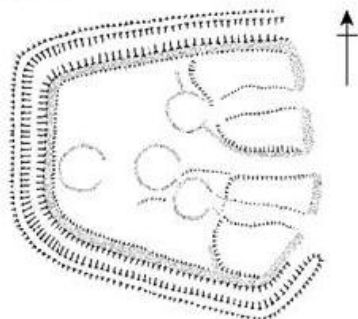
Ells Knowe



Hartside



Riding Wood



Riding Wood

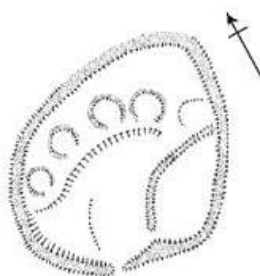


Figure 14.11 Settlement sites from Northumberland (source: Jobey 1966a).

These north British sites with their ten to twelve huts per half hectare were three times more densely settled than those of north-west Wales. However, not all the huts were in use at one time and construction may have been spread over many centuries. Excavation of Traprain Law, East Lothian, which at one time reached 16 ha, has shown that here at least occupation began in the Late Bronze Age and may have continued sporadically throughout the Iron Age until extensive reuse in the Roman period; the same complexity of occupation may well be true of the other large 'oppida' of the region.

This is certainly so at Eildon Hill where the ramparts and earliest hut circles are Late Bronze Age. Thereafter the site seems to have been abandoned until the Roman period. At Dunton, Roxburgh., on the other hand, occupation in the outermost enclosure was under way in the third or second century BC and continued to the first century AD. It is impossible to know without excavation how many of the huts were in use at any one time or what the density of occupation was in the Iron Age compared with the Late Bronze Age and the Roman period. However, it remains possible that by the later part of the Iron Age some of these oppida had developed into nucleated settlements which may have commanded the allegiance of the inhabitants of the surrounding countryside.

The broad stretch of eastern Britain, from the Tabular Hills in the south to the foothills of the Grampian Highlands – a distance of some 450 km – encompasses a number of sub-regions each offering different constraints and opportunities for settlement and survival. Something of the regional patterning can be seen in the distribution patterns of pottery of distinctive fabrics (Evans 1995) and of quernstones quarried from localized outcrops (Gwilt and Heslop 1995). It is also apparent in differences in settlement morphology (MacInnes 1982) but what impresses overall is the *general* similarity of settlement over the whole region. The norm was the single family unit, though sometimes sites large enough for more than one family are indicated. Where settlements were long-lived, as they very often were, the earlier phases were usually enclosed within a timber palisade while the later showed a preference for boundaries defined by banks and ditches. There were, of course, exceptions to the rule, and some sites, like Broxmouth, by virtue of the impressive size or complexity of their enclosing earthworks, may have become the homesteads of élite lineages. Of hillforts (the ‘minor oppida’) there is little that can usefully be said except that few seem to have been in use after the eighth or seventh century BC or before the first century AD. Together the evidence strongly suggests that the entire region was without centralizing tendencies, yet by the Roman period a number of tribal confederacies are historically attested. Evidently society was structured in such a way that bonds of allegiance allowed communities, scattered over considerable areas, to accept a level of common purpose.

Much has been learned of the economy of the region over the last three decades. It is now widely accepted that agriculture played a significant part in the economy alongside animal husbandry. In the Tees lowlands, spelt became dominant in the second and first centuries BC, but further north emmer remained the most common wheat, though often with barley dominating. Cultivation plots, once

so elusive, are now being recognized in the systems of cord rig, which resembles medieval rig and furrow but in miniature. In all probability these fields were hand dug. Palynological work in Scotland has suggested that extensive forest clearance was under way in the third and second centuries BC (Dumayne-Peaty 1998) (see later, p. 442). Thus the north-eastern communities emerge as self-sufficient in providing for their own needs, independent and with few archaeological signs of there being a significant differentiation in status between homesteads.

Western Scotland and the Western and Northern Isles

The north-western part of Scotland, together with the Hebrides, Orkney and Shetland, still retains one of the best-preserved Iron Age settlement patterns of any part of the British Isles (Barrett 1982; Hingley 1992). The most evident structures are the stone-built brochs and duns, many hundreds of which survive in recognizable form (Figure 14.12). So dramatic are they that they have inspired a considerable literature and many attempts at classification have been offered. Against this background it is surprising how little systematic excavation had been carried out until comparatively recently. A number of sites were examined in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries but techniques of recovery were ill-developed and the record is, on the whole, poor. In the post-war period a new phase of study began with the excavation of Jarlshof, Shetland, and there are now twenty or so well-excavated sites providing sequences useful for assessing settlement development. The more significant of these will be considered in the paragraphs to follow.

The terminology used to describe the settlements of the north-west has evolved over the years. Gordon Childe, impressed by the defensive strength of the settlements, referred to them as the 'castle complex' (Childe 1935b) while recognizing the variety covered by his generalization. By the 1960s it was conventional to divide the sites into two broad types, brochs and duns, which have complementary though overlapping distributions (Figure 14.12). But each of these broad categories can be further subdivided. As long ago as 1947 Scott argued that the *brochs* were essentially overgrown roundhouses, and although this view did not prove to be popular at the time, the belief being that the brochs were tower-like structures, it is now accepted that many of the brochs were comparatively low in height and far more like elaborate houses (Fojut 1992; Armit 1990a, 1990b), though a few, such as Mousa on Shetland and Dun Telve, Skye and Lochalsh,

grew to exceptional proportions and can reasonably be regarded as towers. MacKie has also introduced the term *semi-broch* for broch-like structures situated on the edge of a promontory or precipice so that one side of the building can be omitted or represented by a low parapet (MacKie 1965c, 1992). He argued that the type may have been ancestral to circular brochs. The *duns* are now generally divided into two rather different categories: small, circular, strongly fortified dwellings and larger enclosures protecting smaller houses (Harding 1984; Níeke 1990). These larger enclosures are more akin to small forts and may be placed in the same general category as the *promontory forts* or *cliff castles* particularly prevalent in the Northern Isles (Lamb 1980). A version of the promontory fort – the so-called *blockhouse* – appears only on Shetland. Finally there is the *wheelhouse* which may be characterized as a circular stone-built structure the interior of which is divided by short radial piers projecting from the wall. Wheel- houses are well represented on the Western Isles and on Shetland but are unknown on Orkney.

In an attempt to clarify the situation Ian Armit has introduced a new terminology (Armit 1990b, 1990c, 1990d, 1992, 2002). He accepts the validity and the distinctive nature of the wheelhouses but has proposed to call all other domestic structures *Atlantic roundhouses*, incorporating within this category both brochs and duns but excluding the fort-like enclosures which had previously been classified with the duns. The Atlantic roundhouses he divides into two types, *simple* and *complex*, the difference being that the *complex Atlantic roundhouses* employ some or all of a set of architectural traits, including hollow-walled construction, scarcement ledges, intra-mural stairs and guard-cells, which he collectively calls *broch architecture*. Thus the complex Atlantic roundhouses include galleried duns, brochs and broch towers.

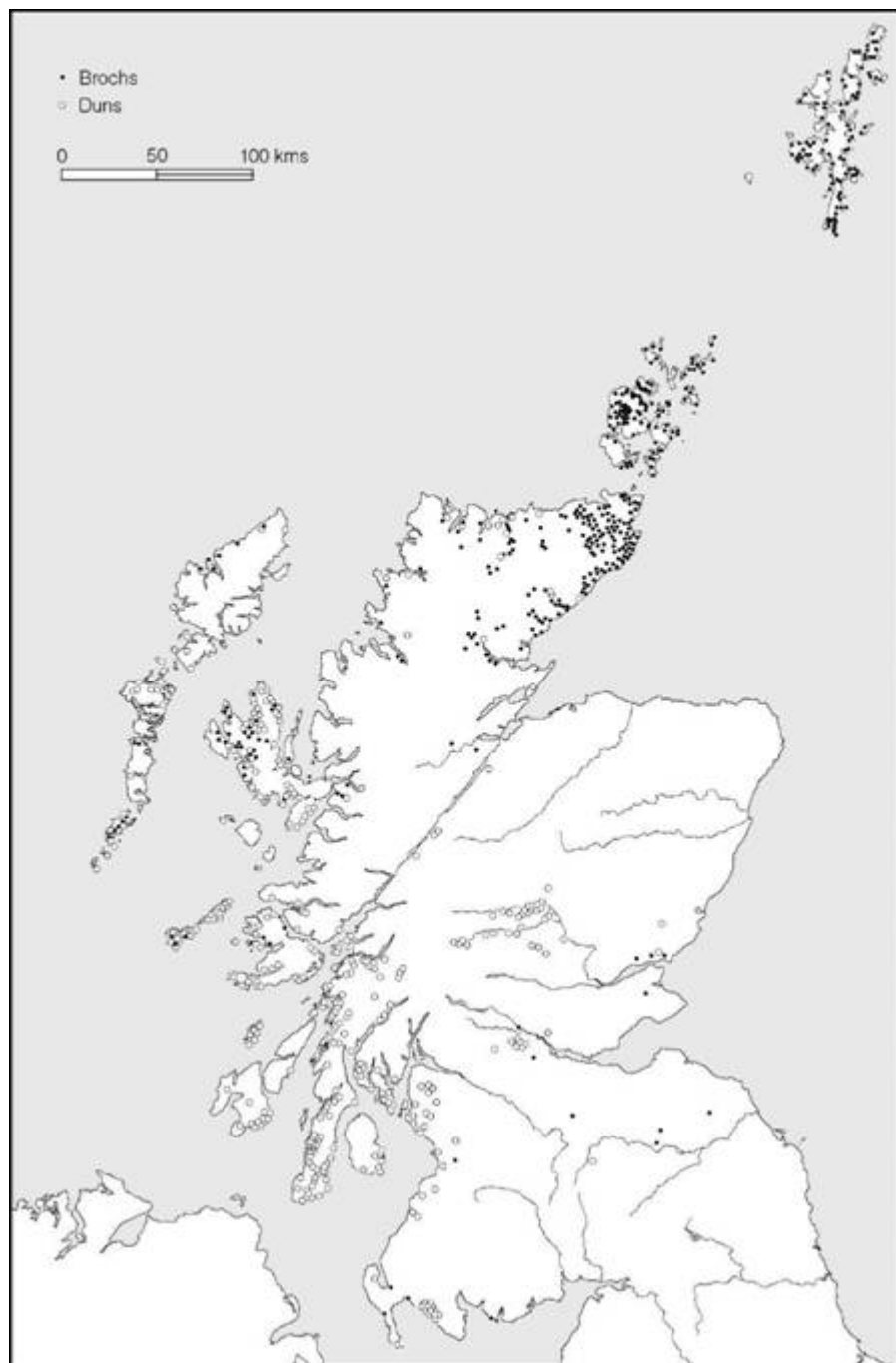


Figure 14.12 *Distribution of brochs and duns (source: Rivet 1966).*

A number of significant excavations undertaken in the last half

century or so have provided useful sequences allowing the development of settlement architecture to be studied and local sequences to be established, while the use of radiocarbon dating and an assessment of stratified artefacts are beginning to provide a broad dating framework. Cellular houses of the Late Bronze Age (above, p. 60) begin to be replaced on the Northern Isles by simple Atlantic roundhouses best known on Orkney at Quanterness, Bu (Figure 14.13), Pierowall and Tofts Ness, and on Shetland at Clickhimin. Radiocarbon dating suggests that this process was under way in the seventh century BC and that houses of this kind were being built and occupied throughout the Early Iron Age (600–400 BC). From about 400 BC complex Atlantic roundhouses began to be built, presumably as a development of the indigenous tradition. Examples include Howe, Orkney, and Crosskirk, Caithness, both of which appear to be the focal structures of more extensive settlement complexes protected by an outer enclosure. The appearance of the true broch tower is rather more difficult to date, but since a number of broch towers, like Gurness, dominate sites that were in use before the appearance of the rotary quern in the area it is possible that they could date to as early as 200 BC (Armit 1992). The origin of wheelhouses is also difficult to date. In the Outer Hebrides a fine example of a wheelhouse at Sollas, North Uist, could be shown by radiocarbon dating to have been in use in the first and second centuries AD, and similar dating is indicated on Shetland at Jarlshof and Clickhimin where wheelhouses were built after the brochs had been in use for some time. It is quite possible, however, that wheel- houses developed earlier, in the first century BC or even earlier, evolving from the simple Atlantic roundhouse tradition. The early house at Quanterness, Orkney, dating to c. 700 BC, already shows many of the basic characteristics of the wheelhouse though, it should be noted, wheel- houses do not appear to have been a feature of later Iron Age Orcadian settlement. It is on the Hebrides or Shetland that we might eventually be able to trace a thread of continuity from the simple Atlantic roundhouse to the wheelhouse.

Simple Atlantic roundhouses and early fortifications

Excavations at Bu, Pierowall and Quanterness, all on Orkney, have brought to light well-preserved examples of simple roundhouses belonging to the early stages of the Iron Age (c. 700–400 BC) (Figure 14.13) (Gilmour 2002). Bu Broch with its massive wall 4–5 m thick is of broch-like proportions but lacks the refinements of broch architecture. Access is via a narrow entrance passage which leads through a vestibule into a central area, dominated by a hearth, beyond which peripheral rooms are arranged, some with flagged floors. The

Quanterness roundhouse was somewhat smaller and had a less well-defined inner arrangement, and its walls were much less massive. At Pierowall only a small sector of the building was exposed but it had an external diameter of at least 16 m, with walls 3 m thick.

On Shetland the long-inhabited settlement which developed on an island in the loch of Click-himin provides convincing evidence of the place of the simple Atlantic roundhouse within a sequence of occupation ([Figure 14.14](#)). The earliest settlement (period I) consisted of an oval-shaped cellular house built entirely of stone, dating to the Late Bronze Age. The building belongs to the same tradition as the cellular structures which lie at the beginning of the settlement sequences at Jarlshof ([Figure 3.19](#)) and at Sumburgh ([Figure 14.13](#)). This was replaced by a large roundhouse (period II) associated with carinated pottery. Eventually (period III) the house was encircled with a defensive fort wall, inside which lay a blockhouse, to protect the entrance. At this time the accommodation was greatly increased by the construction of timber ranges around the inside of the fort wall, probably standing to a height of two storeys with stalls below and living space above. The blockhouse is a remarkable structure ([Figure 14.15](#)). Originally it would have been three storeys high with an attached timber-built range behind. At ground-floor level a central passage was provided in the masonry, leading to the dwelling space behind, while at first-floor level a door gave access between the rooms of the timber range and mural cells constructed within the thickness of the blockhouse masonry; the second floor was probably a wall-walk to provide a vantage point. It seems likely that the blockhouse was intended to have been integral with the main defensive wall, but this was never achieved. In the final pre-broch phase at Clickhimin (period IV), after repair of the outer fort wall and the demolition of the timber ranges, work began on the construction of an inner ring-wall around the island, butting up to the original Iron Age circular hut, which remained in use. The work was, however, unfinished by the time that the broch was constructed.

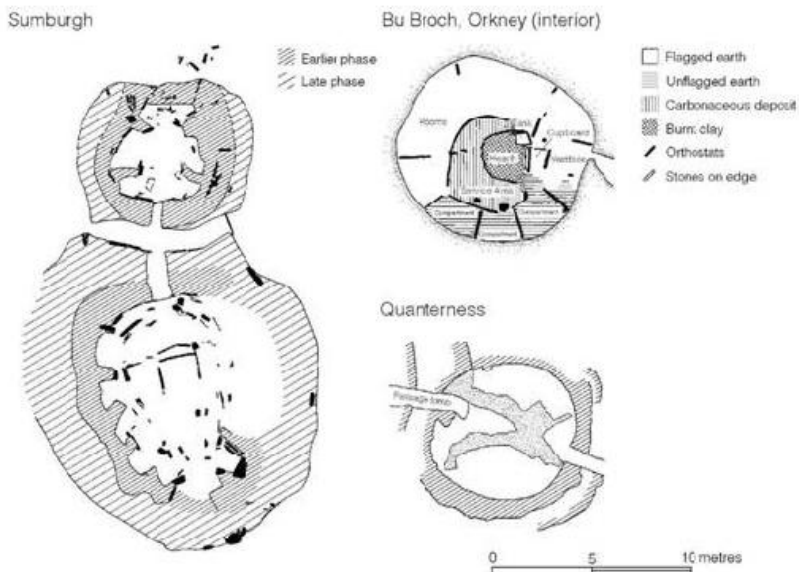


Figure 14.13 Roundhouses of the Northern Isles (sources: Sumburgh, Downes and Lamb 2000; Bu Broch, Hedges 1987; Quanterness, Renfrew 1979).

Blockhouses of the kind recorded at Clickhimin are known from three other Shetland sites: at Ness of Burgi and Scatness on the Sumburgh peninsula, and on a small islet in the Loch of Huxter (Figure 14.16). The last has a wall encircling the islet attached to it but the other two are free-standing on promontories protected by banks and ditches (Carter *et al.* 1995). The four known blockhouses are curious structures. All, in their initial stages, were free-standing, all were sited on promontories or islands, and none makes sense as defence or as settlement. It is tempting to suggest that in their style of architecture – appearing as monumental gateways – and their liminal locations they may have served as foci for rituals associated with the passage between land and sea.

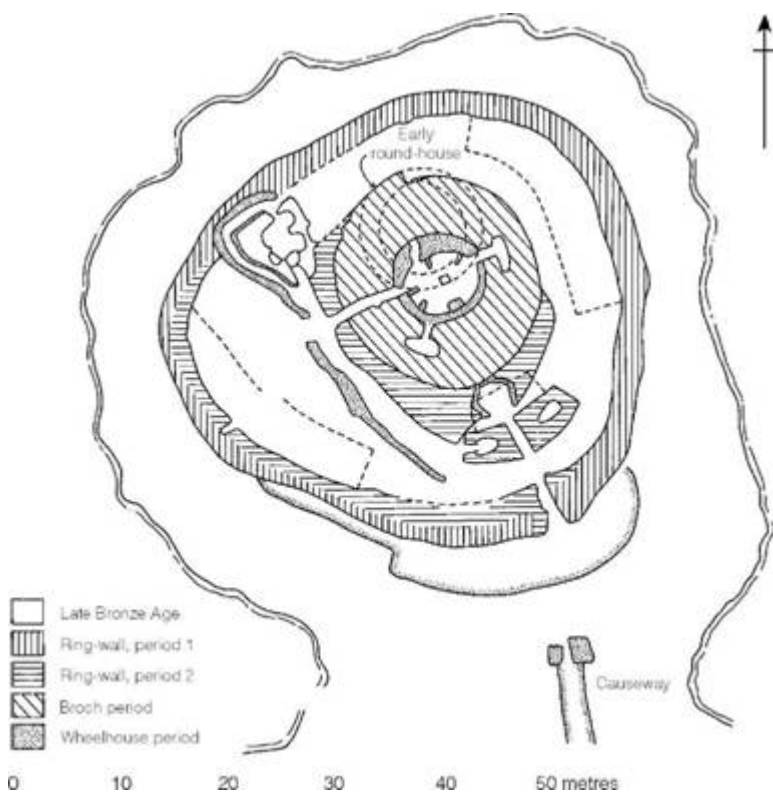


Figure 14.14 *Plan of the settlement at Clickhimin, Shetland (source: J.R.C. Hamilton 1968).*

The Clickhimin sequence is of great value in that it presents a complete and unbroken development spanning the period from the seventh to the first century before the broch was built. It has been suggested (Hamilton 1968) that the blockhouse architecture should be considered to be immediately ancestral to the development of the brochs, implying that brochs originated somewhere in the Northern Isles – perhaps on Orkney, where the building stone is eminently suitable. The problem, however, is a difficult one and will be considered again below (pp. 334–5).

At Sumburgh, at the southern extremity of Shetland, a complex sequence of building was examined spanning the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages (Figure 14.13). In the Early Iron Age two houses, one large and one small, were in contemporary use, so arranged that they shared a common entrance passage. The interior arrangements owe much to the cellular Late Bronze Age tradition but the associated pottery indicates an Early Iron Age date.

Elsewhere in north and west Scotland positive evidence of early

occupation is scarce, but survey work has shown that hut circles are not uncommon and in Sutherland alone there are estimated to be some 2,000 still surviving. One group, at Kilphedir, has been thoroughly examined. Here, two phases of occupation are represented, the first, dated by a single radiocarbon assessment to the fifth century BC, consisted of five circular huts with stone outer walls and with roofs supported on settings of internal vertical timbers. Around them it would seem that the land had been cleared for limited agricultural use, leaving a scatter of clearance cairns. The second phase of occupation was represented by a single, more massively built, hut, the walls of which had been extended on either side of the entrance to create a narrow entrance passage 3 m long. In plan the structure was not unlike a primitive form of broch. This phase was dated by radiocarbon to the second century BC and it was probably in this period that a group of irregular fields lined with boulders were laid out.

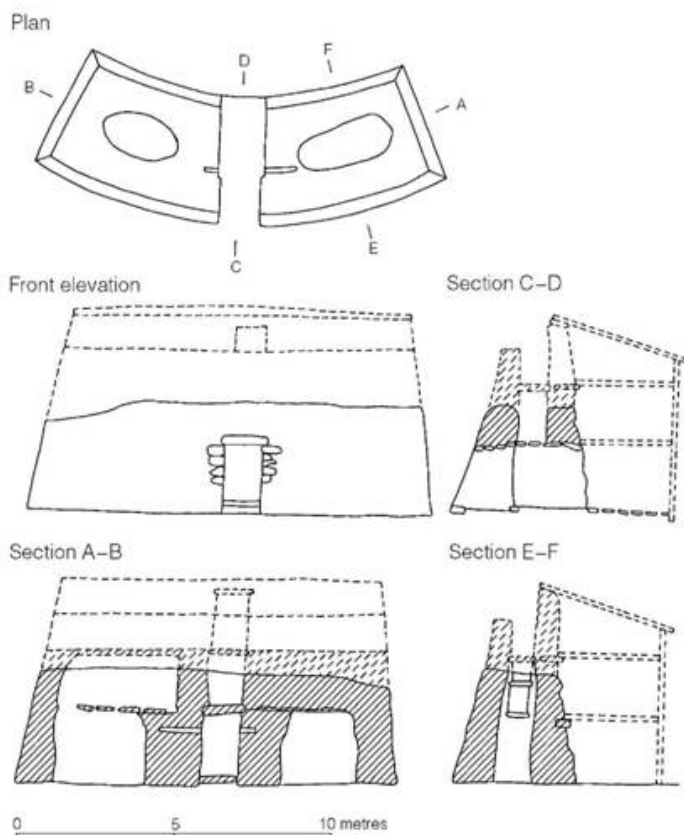


Figure 14.15 The blockhouse at Clickhimin, Shetland (source: J.R.C. Hamilton 1968).

A survey of similar settlements in the vicinity has shown that most are found between the 60 and 120 m contours. It is probable that the land below this, in the river valleys, was densely wooded, while above, the exposed position and poor soils would have been too inhospitable for settlement. The Kilphedir evidence is interesting in that it suggests the sporadic rather than continuous occupation of marginal land.

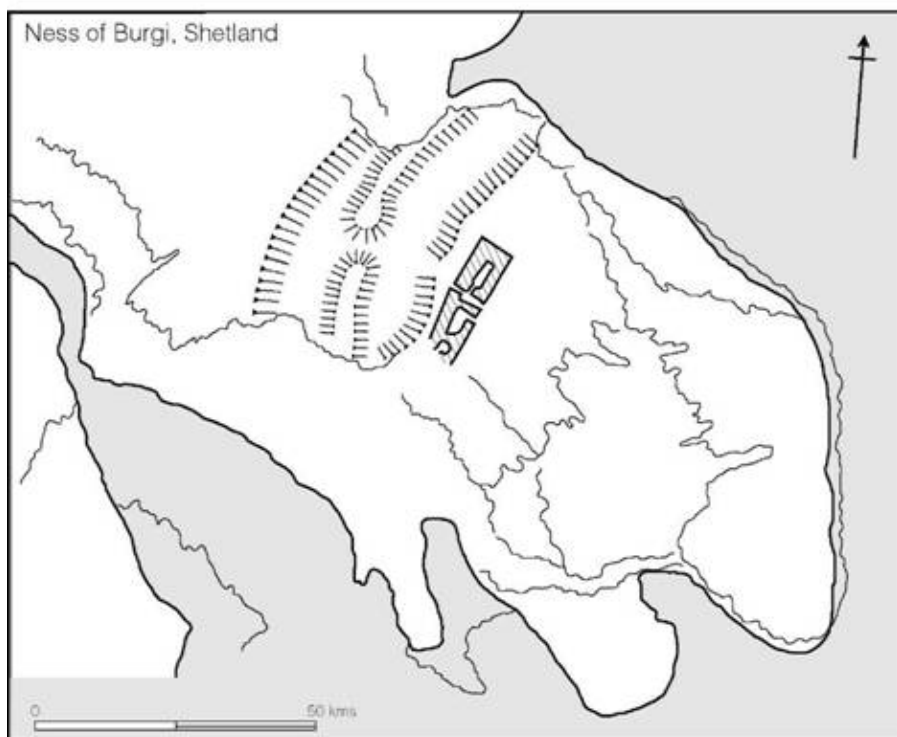
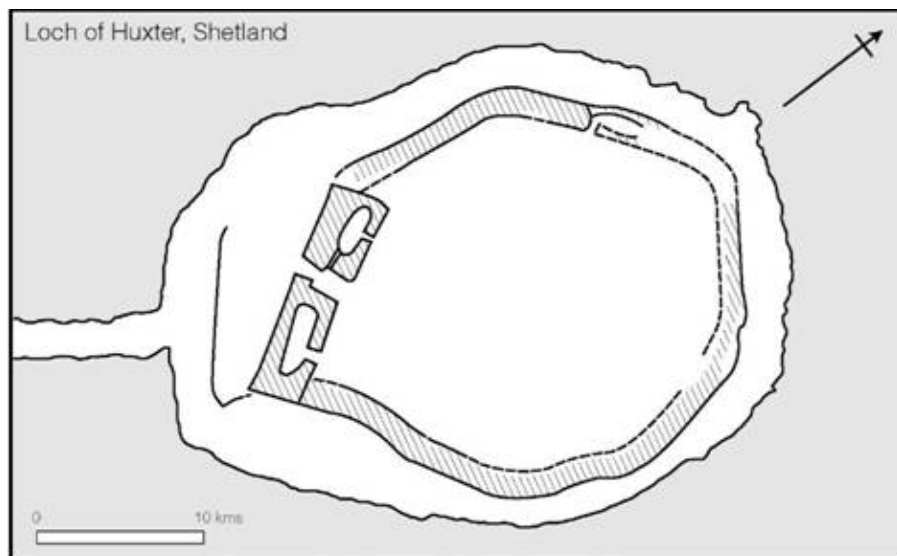


Figure 14.16 Comparative blockhouses on Shetland (source: J.R.C. Hamilton 1968).

The early settlements of the west coast and Western Isles are less well known, but at Dun Mor Vaul on Tiree (Argyll.) a pre-broch

midden of the fifth to third centuries has been examined, and at Dun Lagaidh near Ullapool a vitrified fort with radiocarbon dates of the sixth to fifth centuries BC has been shown to pre-date a broch. There are however no known examples of cellular houses of the Late Bronze Age on the Western Isles, though roundhouses of the Late Bronze or Early Iron Age have been identified (Parker Pearson and Sharples 1999, 364).

Complex Atlantic roundhouses: brochs and duns

Brochs and duns are a common feature of the Iron Age landscape of the north and west of Scotland ([Figure 14.13](#)).

Duns are essentially dry-stone walled enclosures seldom exceeding 370 square metres in internal area ([Figure 14.17](#)). The walls, originally about 3 m high, were normally solid but some were provided with mural galleries or simple mural cells. According to the definition proposed by Armit, those with sophisticated architectural features like hollow-walled construction, scarcement ledges, intra-mural stairs and guard-cells belong to the category of complex Atlantic roundhouses. In the majority of the unexcavated examples, however, it is impossible to tell if these features are present or not.

Brochs, also classed as Atlantic roundhouses, were generally taller and more regular in plan, with a few rising to 9 m or more in height, and are characterized by the cellular nature of their wall structure, which consisted of two concentric skins about 1 m apart, held together by rows of stone lintels inserted every 1.5 or 1.8 m in vertical intervals and bonded into both walls ([Figure 14.18](#)). This arrangement resulted in the creation of superimposed mural galleries interlinked by stone staircases. The outer walls are always built solid, with no openings save the single ground-floor entrance, but in some examples the inner wall-face is broken by vertical openings divided by horizontal lintels placed at intervals. The main entrance is always a long narrow passage passing through both walls, frequently with a cell or guard-chamber opening off one side of the passage (Martlew 1983).

The inner wall-face was usually provided with at least one ledge or scarcement 1.5 m or so above floor level. This, together with settings of posts within the broch, gives some hint of the treatment of the upper part of the structure. One view is that the scarcement and posts supported a gallery (MacKie 1965c, 104–5) but it is equally possible that a complete upper floor was provided at this level. Additional ledges may have supported further floors, with the uppermost ledge taking the eaves of a roof. In the majority of cases, however, there may have been no upper floors, the scarcement serving for the roof.

The excavation of the buildings of Bu and Howe and the reconsideration of Gurness, all on Orkney, leave little doubt that in

their original forms the structures were designed to house single family units. The common arrangement was to divide the interior into a central communal space, surrounded by a peripheral zone subdivided into a series of small cells (Figure 14.19). The central zone contained the hearth and boiling tank. The peripheral zone was probably used for storage and as sleeping compartments. Such an internal arrangement is closely comparable to that of the wheelhouses and to certain of the crannogs (e.g. Milton Loch). The concept of the central living area with peripheral sleeping and storage space can also be postulated for the larger timber houses of the Forth–Tees region and of parts of southern England. In a few examples, e.g. Gurness and Burrian, the interiors were later rearranged in a manner which suggests occupation by more than one family group (Hedges 1985; Reid 1989, 14–15). This may be a reflection of social changes consequent upon contact with the Roman world.

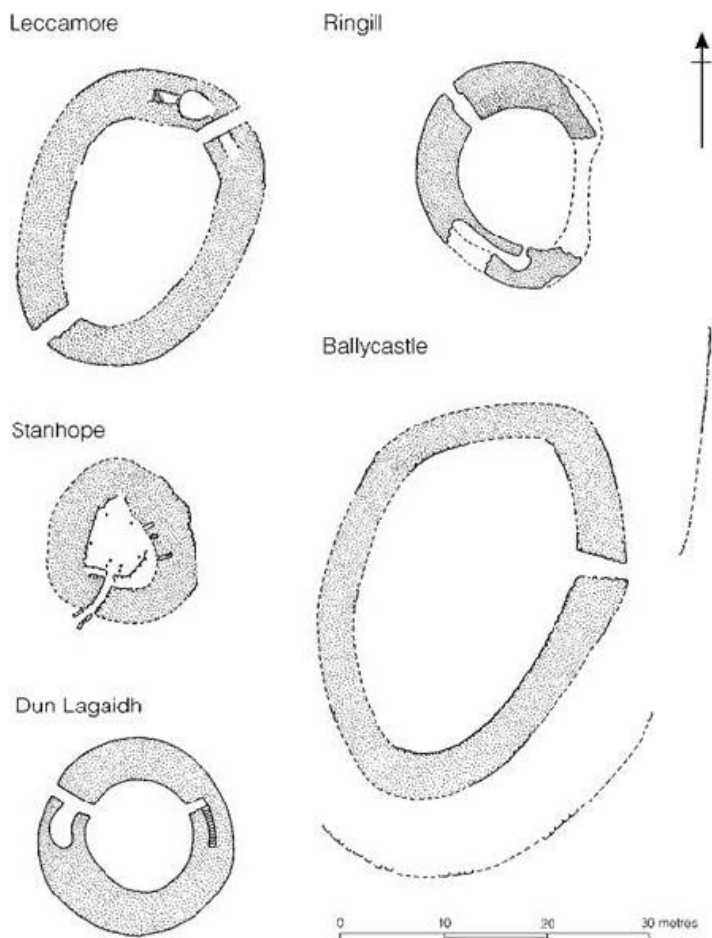
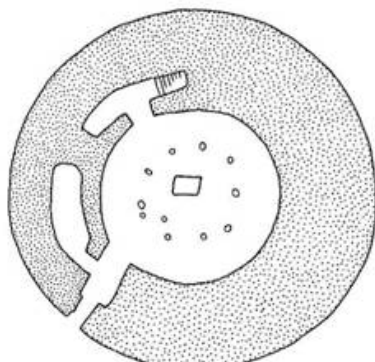
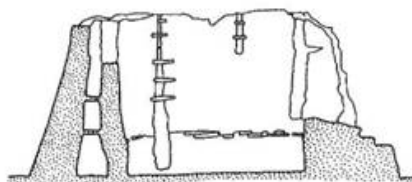
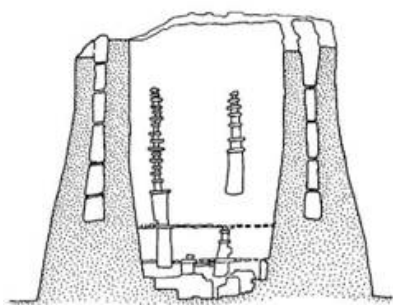


Figure 14.17 Plans of Scottish duns (sources: Stanhope, Peebles., MacLaren 1962; Ringill, Skye, Young 1964; Dun Lagaidh, Ross and Cromarty, MacKie 1968; Leccamore and Ballycastle, Argyll., RCHM(S) Argyll.).

Broch of Mousa, Shetland

Broch of Dun Troddan, Inverness



0 10 20 metres

Figure 14.18 Brochs (source: Mousa and Dun Troddan, Curle 1927).

Some brochs form the central element of considerable settlements. The best known of these is Gurness on Orkney (Figures 14.19 and 14.20) where fourteen conjoined buildings cluster around the broch, all lying within the protection of a double-walled enclosure. Similar settlements are found at Howe, Midhouse and Lingro. In the case of Gurness and Howe there is evidence that the external settlements were broadly contemporary with the main occupation of their broch. In these instances we are clearly dealing with large social groupings, the extra broch settlement presumably housing the dependants of the broch owner. A consideration of routes of access through the settlement to the broch supports the view that in these complexes the brochs would have housed the élite (Foster 1989).

Mention of the defences around the brochs raises the difficult question of the promontory fortifications which occur around the

coasts of Orkney, Shetland and Caithness (Lamb 1980). While a number are evidently associated with brochs, others are not. Only in one case, Crosskirk, Caithness, is it possible to show that the promontory fort pre-dates a broch. In the general absence of dating evidence elsewhere, all that can be said is that some of these structures may be of Iron Age date.

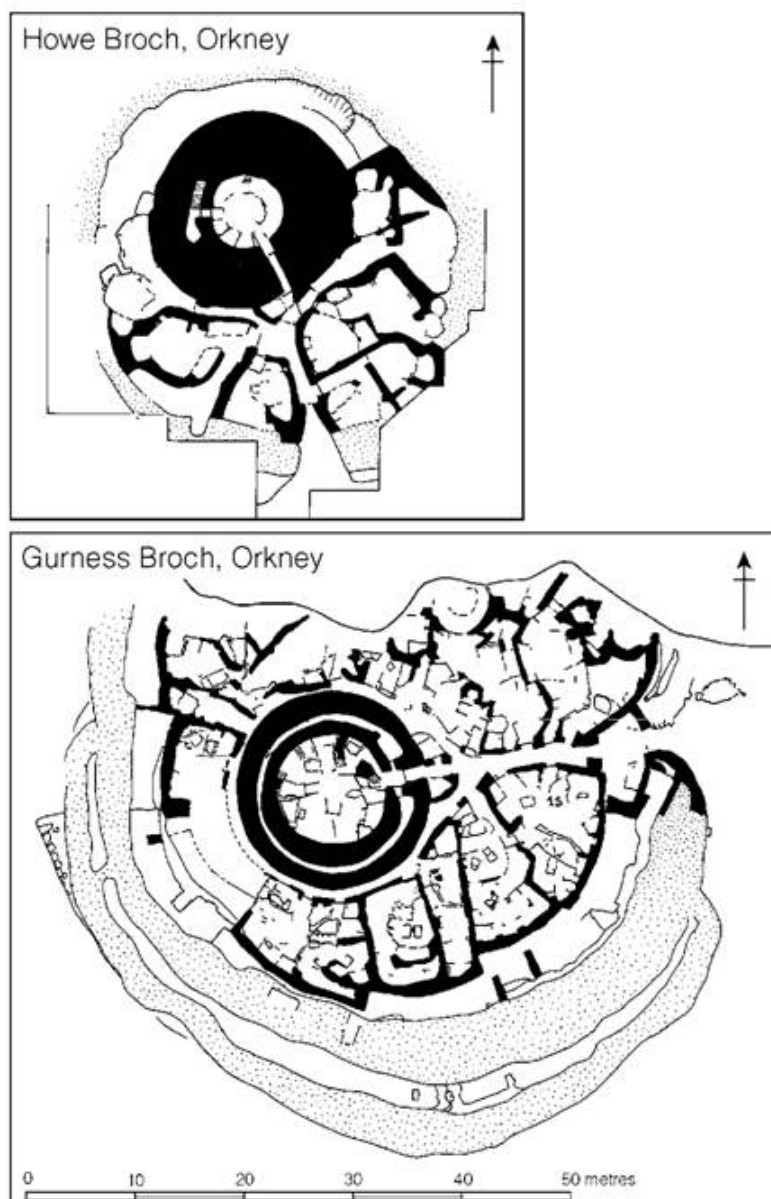


Figure 14.19 *Brochs with adjacent settlements (sources: Gurness, Hedges 1987; Howe, Carter, Haigh, Neil and Smith 1984).*



Figure 14.20 *The broch of Gurness, Orkney (photograph: Crown Copyright reserved).*

Regional varieties of brochs have been defined (MacKie 1965c, 105–10), but the details cannot be examined here except to say that those of Caithness, Sutherland and Orkney tend to be more sophisticated in structure. Another difference is one of siting: while those in the Western Isles are usually built in isolation, the northern group more often stand in fortified enclosures of masonry or earth-and-rubble construction.

The origin of the brochs has been a subject of much debate. The excavation of Bu with its early construction date of c. 600 BC is of some significance to the debate because, while Bu does not possess the refinements of classic broch architecture, its basic form and unusually thick walls suggest that it is a direct ancestor of the more complex broch structures. Among the other thoroughly excavated sites, at the broch of Crosskirk, Caithness, radiocarbon dates suggest a construction date of about 200 BC, but the broch continued in use well into the second century AD. At Howe, Orkney, a roundhouse of uncertain form dating to the fourth to third centuries BC was replaced by an early broch which may have been contemporary with Crosskirk, if not earlier. The broch was later rebuilt in the first century AD at which time a settlement developed around the structure. Occupation continued into the fourth century AD. Dun Ardtreck, a semi-broch on Skye, produced a second-century BC assessment for charcoal from the rubble foundations, while from Dun Mor Vaul, on Tiree, dates of the first century AD for a primary floor level and the second to third centuries AD for rubble which accumulated in the first wall gallery

indicate a late first-century BC or early first-century AD construction date. A number of brochs have also produced artefact assemblages showing that occupation continued throughout the first and second centuries AD. Further south, at Leckie, Stirlingshire, the broch was not built until the late first century AD.

The available evidence therefore suggests that the main period of use of the brochs was from the second century BC to the second century AD but the Bu radiocarbon dates would allow that the tradition of broch building began much earlier, on Orkney at least (Hedges and Bell 1980b). The radiocarbon dating, together with an assessment of the associated material culture, suggests that brochs, with all their architectural refinements, may have begun around 400 BC (Armit 1992).

The origin of the brochs has been a matter of some dispute but it is now generally agreed that they developed somewhere in the Atlantic province. One suggestion is that they originated in the Caithness–Orkney region, in the area of their greatest concentration (Childe 1935b, 204; Hamilton 1962, 82); another is that they arose in the west, possibly on Skye, where there is a considerable variety of stone structures, including a concentration of semi-brochs which might be thought to be ancestral to the true brochs (MacKie 1965c, 124–6). In support of this latter view, it has been argued that the broch was more appropriate to the defence of the small pockets of farmland typical of the western Highlands and Islands and is strictly alien to the more open countryside of Caithness and Sutherland. The early precursor at Bu and the early dates of Crosskirk and Howe would favour an origin in the Caithness–Orkney region. Added support for a northern origin is also provided by Caufield's study of querns (1980), which shows that a significant number of northern brochs had the early type of saddle quern in primary layers whereas the western brochs have produced only the later rotary type.

Several excavations should be mentioned because of the light they throw on the relative position of brochs in the structural development of the individual sites. In each case there is clear proof of some degree of continuity of occupation. At Dun Mor Vaul the broch was shown to have been built on a site already occupied for several hundred years, but at Dun Lagaidh, Wester Ross, the later structure was built over part of a vitrified fort for which a sixth-century radiocarbon date is available, suggesting a period of abandonment between periods of occupation. At Dun Vulcan, on South Uist, the broch was built, probably in the second or first century BC, on a site that had already been occupied in the Late Bronze Age, and continued to be used until the eighth century AD. At Crosskirk, Caithness, the broch was erected inside an already existing promontory fort while at Howe, on Orkney,

a long sequence of houses existed before the broch was built to replace them. Clickhimin, Shetland, provides the most complete sequence of fortification at present available; the broch was built late in the history of the site but the presence of the earlier blockhouse, which embodies several of the constructional techniques of the broch-builders, evidently represents a stage of construction towards the beginning of the complex sequence which must lie behind the eventual emergence of the fully fledged broch.

Many brochs are sited close to the sea, and evidently depended to a considerable extent on seafood. On Orkney, for example, brochs are found regularly spaced along the shores, particularly of the more sheltered waters, like Eynhallow Sound between Mainland and Rousay (Figure 14.21). Each was sited so that its resource potential would have included upland sheep grazing, a length of coastal shelf suitable for crop growing, the shore zone itself for shellfish collecting, and the sea, providing a range of possible food sources. Even the inland brochs on Orkney show a distinct preference for siting near lochs. Evidently fish must have played a significant part in the economy. On Skye, too, the brochs and duns favoured a coastal location but clustered on areas of good arable and pasture land (MacSween 1985), while on South Uist the brochs opt for the exposed west coast, choosing sites on the interface between the moorland to the east and the fertile machair and blacklands to the west, with the ocean beyond (Parker Pearson and Sharples 1999, 10–12). A detailed survey of the brochs on Shetland (Fojut 1982b) has shown a similar preference for siting brochs close to the sea but within easy reach of good-quality farming land (Figure 14.22). The survey has further suggested that the majority of the broch territories were self-sufficient but there may have been some localized redistribution of consumer goods between neighbours. An even more interesting conclusion was that, in spite of the considerable density of settlements, the population was far below the holding capacity of their island territory. The desire for fortification was not therefore occasioned by stress brought about by uncomfortably high population levels.

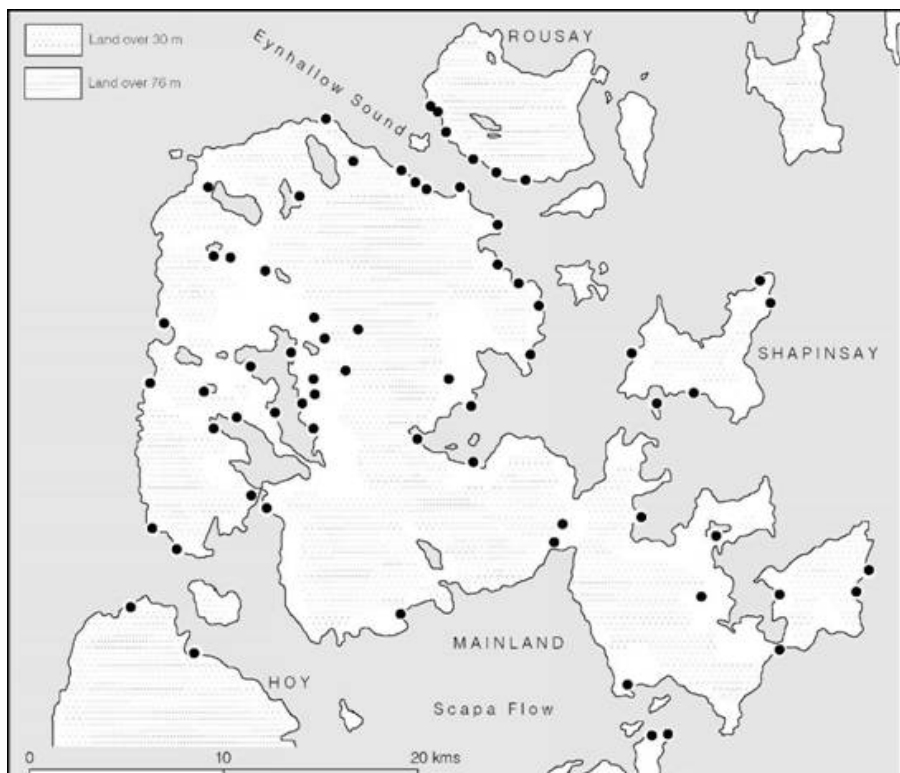


Figure 14.21 *The siting of brochs on Orkney (source: RCHM(S) Orkney and Shetland).*

Wheelhouses

The wheelhouse represents a somewhat different type of structure (Crawford 2002). They are found in the same region as the brochs, except that no wheelhouses have been identified on Orkney, and are broadly contemporary with them. A wheelhouse is a circular stone-built structure, the interior of which is divided by short radial stone piers projecting from the wall but leaving the interior clear. The piers presumably supported the roof of wood and turf in much the same way as internal settings of vertical posts would have done in the timber-built houses of the south. In some examples, known as aisled wheelhouses, the piers are free-standing but are joined to the outer wall by lintels.

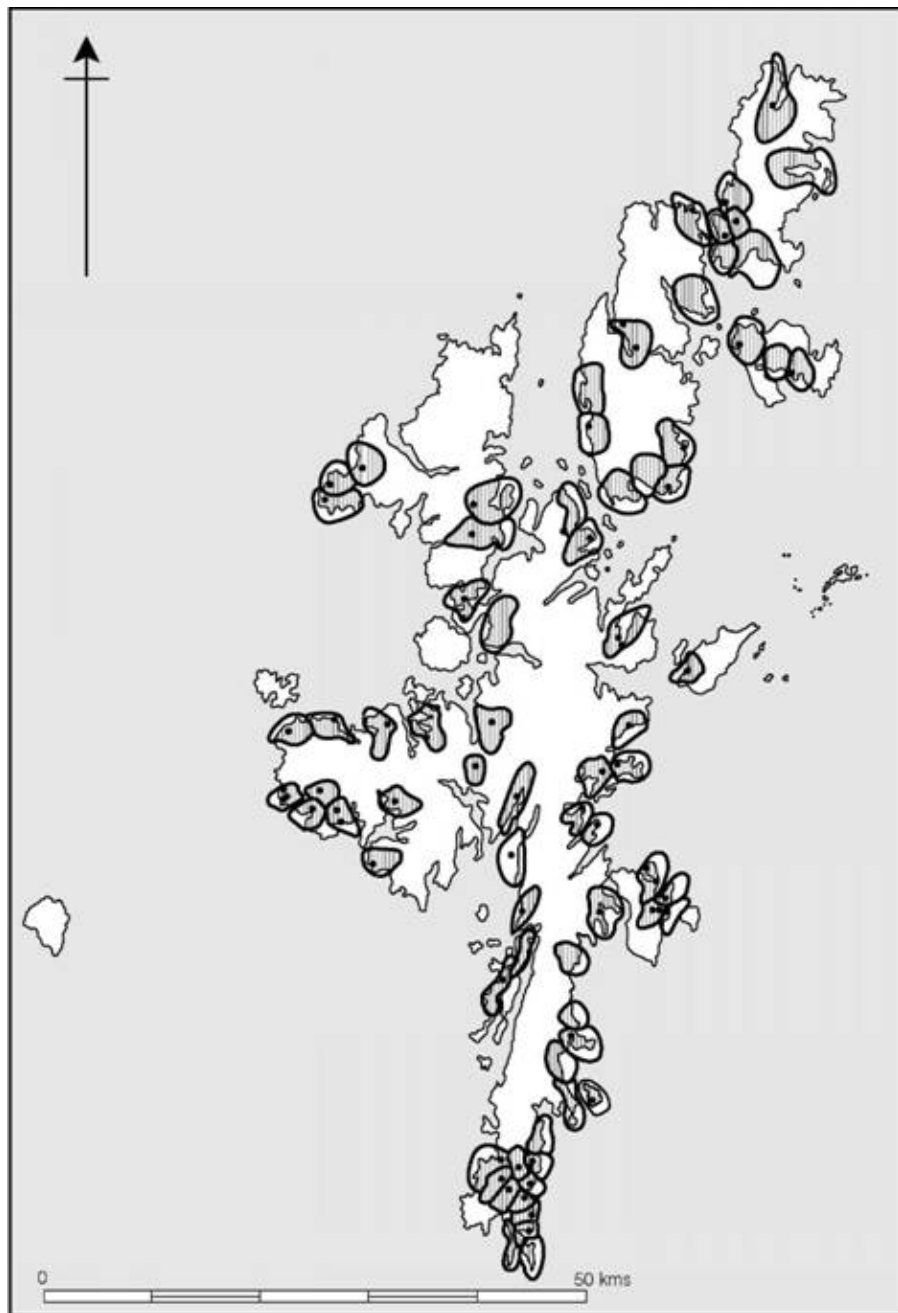


Figure 14.22 The brochs of Shetland indicating their possible economic territories (source: Fojut 1982b).

Some wheelhouses, like Tigh Talamhanta (Allasdale) and Cletraval

in the Hebrides (Figures 14.26 and 14.27), were built as free-standing houses surrounded by a farmyard enclosure containing working areas as well as subsidiary structures like byres or barns. Others, like Sollas, North Uist, were embedded in sand dunes. At Jarlshof, Shetland, on the other hand, the first aisled wheelhouse was built into the yard attached to the broch with a byre close by (Figures 14.23–14.25). This building is of particular interest because in its original stage the roof was supported on vertical timbers which were only later replaced by free-standing stone piers. Later still the original aisled wheelhouse was dismantled and replaced by a conjoined pair of wheel-houses, superbly built with radial piers corbelled out at the top to roof the individual bays. Jarlshof, then, appears to demonstrate the entire sequence of wheelhouse development. Elsewhere on Shetland, as for example at Clickhimin, most of the wheelhouses were found to be inserted into brochs. This same sequence is evident at the spectacularly well-preserved site of Old Scatness (Figure 14.28), where the broch, dated to within the period 400–200 BC, forms the nucleus of a settlement later dominated by wheelhouses.

While there is some evidence to suggest that elements of wheelhouse architecture were developing on Shetland before the brochs, possibly in the third and second centuries BC, and may well derive from simple circular houses of the type found at Sumburgh, the major occurrence of wheelhouses dates to after the brochs had begun to go out of use as defended structures. The range of stratified Roman imports suggests a first- to third-century AD date and in the Outer Hebrides houses of this type can be shown to span the period from the first to fourth centuries AD. At Old Scatness radiocarbon dates show that wheelhouses remained in use into the ninth century AD.

The economy of the north and west was largely self-sufficient: sheep and cattle were kept, deer were hunted, cereals were grown, while the sea provided seals, whales, fish, shellfish and sea-birds. Throughout the period, tools tended to be made in local materials like bone, slate and quartz, while utensils were manufactured in pottery, steatite and presumably leather. Apart from a restricted range of bronze and iron tools and ornaments, metal was never common. It seems, therefore, that for much of the early part of the Iron Age, communities lived peacefully in open settlements but gradually defences multiplied, giving rise to a densely fortified landscape in which almost every homestead was defended. Such a process may well have developed in parallel with the increased emphasis on defence apparent in most other parts of the country. There is no need to introduce the idea of an alien breed of ‘castle-builders’ to explain a process which in all probability was the result of widespread pressures created by internal social development. Over much of the western area the land was

broken into isolated fertile pockets by natural barriers such as mountains and deep inlets. Inevitably, in such conditions, communities tended to remain isolated and settlements failed to nucleate.

Some time in the third century BC or a little earlier a specialized type of fortified house – the broch – perfectly adapted to the requirements of society and its environment became the dominant type. It is hardly surprising that it spread (possibly at the instigation of expert builders) over the whole of the Atlantic province, even into areas like Caithness and Sutherland, where the more gentle undulating land might be thought to be less suitable for such a specialized form of fortification. Brochs continued to dominate the landscape into at least the second century AD, but in the more peaceful conditions which then arose they ceased to be built and were superseded (and sometimes physically replaced) by wheelhouses, which represented the resurgence of the indigenous house type, deeply rooted in the native building traditions of the area.

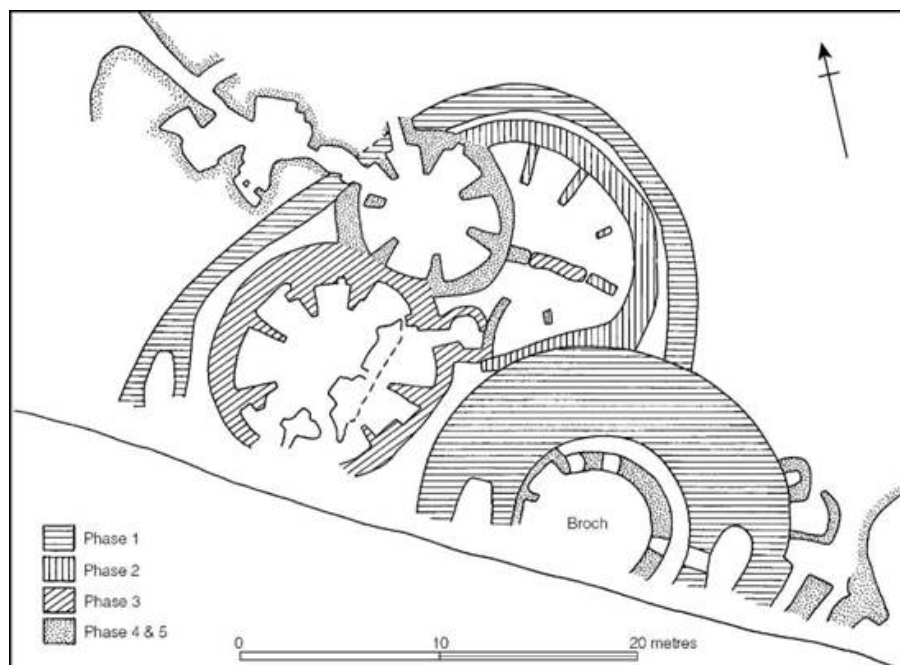


Figure 14.23 *The settlement at Jarlshof, Shetland, beginning with the construction of the broch (source: J.R.C. Hamilton 1956).*

The massive nature of the various types of complex roundhouse and the longevity of most of the sites imply a degree of stability in

landholding and the willingness to invest effort in creating and maintaining structures that dominate the landscape. This has led to debates focusing on the social status of the inhabitants and has raised questions of whether a peasant class, archaeologically largely invisible, existed scattered in the landscape between the more massive roundhouses. In the Outer Hebrides, where the settlements have been extensively studied, Armit (2002) has argued that different patterns can be traced. On North Uist and Barra it would seem that the houses were occupied by a variety of social units from élites to tenant farmers, whereas on South Uist, where the number of large roundhouses is many fewer, it could be argued that the land-holding system was differently organized, with lower-status households unable, or unwilling, to invest in massive structures. Whatever the explanation is, differences of this kind are a salutary reminder that social patterns probably varied considerably from one area to another. At best the archaeological evidence merely allows us to glimpse these differences.

Throughout the period under discussion the communities of the Atlantic province remained dependent on the sea as a means of communication as well as for food gathering and protection. While the sea linked the far-flung parts of this north-western province together, it seems to have isolated it from the rest of the country.



Figure 14.24 *Jarlshof, Shetland: the aisled roundhouse and wheelhouse*

Crannogs and island duns

A specialized type of settlement, known as the crannog, has been identified in many parts of Scotland and particularly in the west of the country (Dixon 1982; Morrison 1985; Henderson 1998; Hale 2000; Harding 2000a). Crannogs were usually built at the edge of lochs and consisted of artificial islands composed of layers of brushwood and rubble sometimes revetted around the edges with vertical piles. In some cases they were surfaced with logs of oak. Upon these artificial platforms stood single buildings constructed either of timber or of stone, the whole structure being joined by a causeway to the shore.

Among the many hundreds of sites known a few have been dated, showing a spread of occupation ranging from the Late Bronze Age to the Middle Ages but with a significant concentration in the Iron Age (Henderson 1998). One of the best known of the crannogs is on Milton Loch, Kirkcudbright., where the artificial island and its associated jetty and small harbour were totally excavated ([Figure 14.29](#)). The platform was largely occupied by a large circular timber-built house 12.8 m in diameter, divided internally into a series of rooms. The building was surrounded by a narrow platform to provide access from the causeway to the harbour facing on to deep water behind. Radiocarbon assessments for an ard found during excavation and for one of the piles of the crannog indicate a date in the fifth century BC.



Figure 14.25 Jarlshof, Shetland: the interior of the wheelhouse (photograph: Crown Copyright reserved).

Crannogs are best seen as a specialized type of homestead built, possibly for defensive purposes, offshore from a lake edge. In size they are comparable to their land-based equivalent, the dun, as Morrison was able to demonstrate by comparing the crannogs and the duns on Loch Aire (Morrison 1985, [figure 4.6](#)).

A variant of the crannog is the 'island dun' which, as the name implies, involves the use of an offshore island as the location for a dun or a broch. Two thoroughly explored examples of this type are known from the island of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides, one at Loch Bharabhat, Cnip, the other at Loch na Beirgh at Riof. In both cases complex Atlantic roundhouses occupy small islands 20–30 m from the loch shore, joined to the mainland by a causeway. In these examples the entrances to the houses are on the opposite side to the causeway and face outwards to open water. In neither case can precise dates be assigned to the construction of the houses but evidence suggests that they were built in the second half of the first millennium BC.

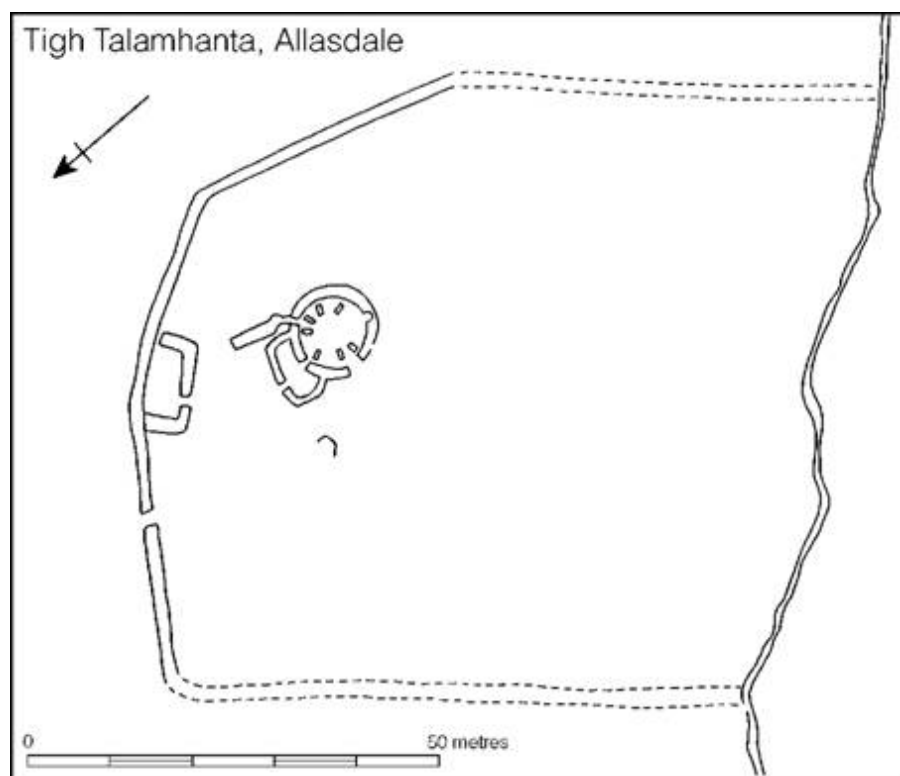
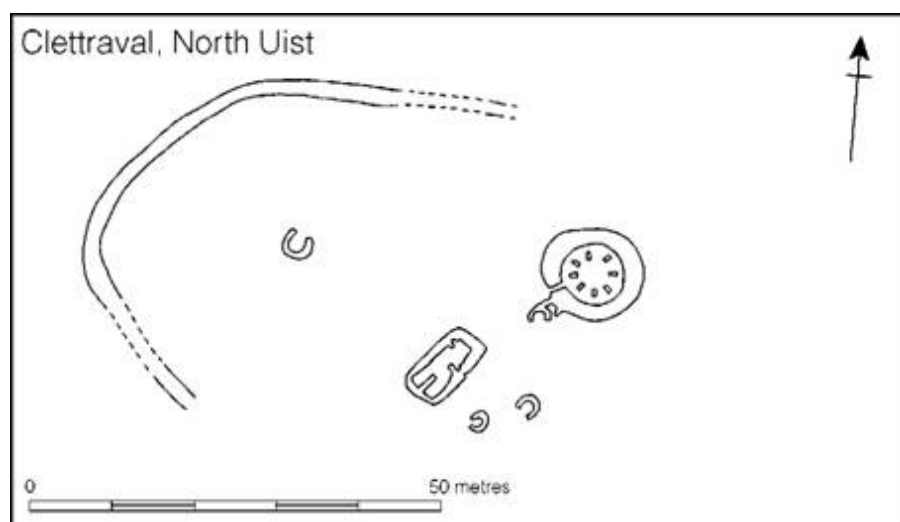
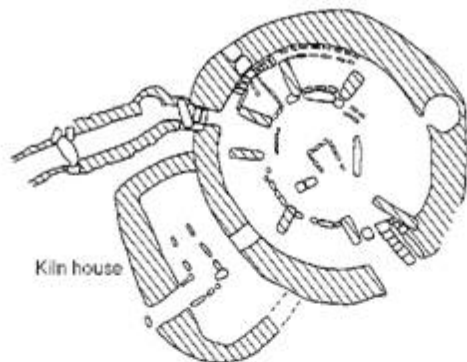
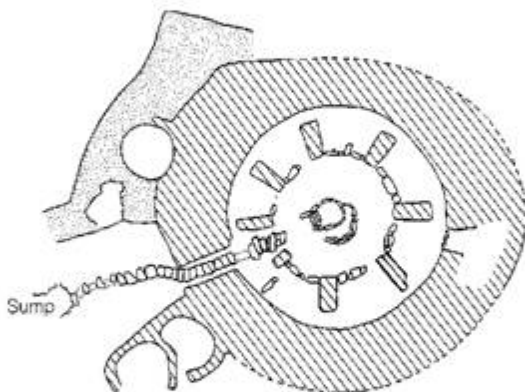


Figure 14.26 Farmsteads in north-west Britain (sources: Clettraval, Scott 1948; Tigh Talamhanta, Young 1955).

Tigh Talamhanta, Allasdale



Clettraval, North Uist



Sollas, North Uist

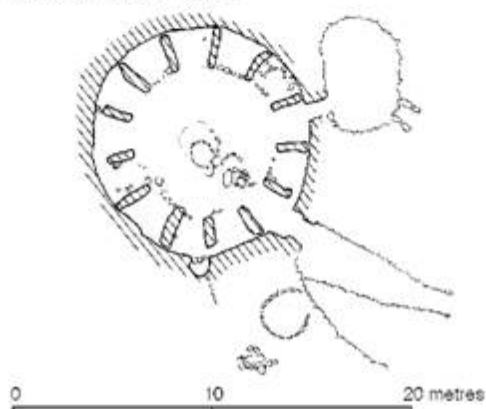


Figure 14.27 Wheelhouses (sources: Clettraval, Scott 1948; Tigh Talamhanta, Young 1955; Sollas, E. Campbell 1992).



Figure 14.28 *Excavation in progress at Old Scatness, Shetland in 2003. The central broch forms the focus of a long-lived settlement later dominated by wheelhouses (photograph: Steve Dorrell).*

While it is conventional to believe that the choice of islands or artificial crannogs as sites for houses is the result of a desire for greater defensive capability, it remains a possibility that other factors may have been at work. Islands might be perceived to be liminal places and as such to endow supernatural power and protection. Similar beliefs might have lain behind the siting of brochs or other settlements on exposed promontories girded by the seas. These are issues deserving further attention.

Summary

From the above survey it will be apparent that the communities living in the north and west of Britain differed in many ways from those of the central and north-eastern regions, not least in their skilled use of stone to create houses impressive in their size and strength. In each of these broad regions there are distinctive sub-regions each with their own styles of building and social arrangements. In most areas it would seem that the single family farmstead was the norm, there being little attempt at creating larger agglomerations of people, but in

some regions, for example on Orkney and in eastern Scotland, villages are known, and in the eastern Scottish region a scattering of hillforts suggests even more complex social arrangements able to wield the coercive power required to build and maintain the forts. Thus across the north we are looking at a variety of social systems in operation, conditioned, to a large extent, by the opportunities and constraints offered by the differing landscapes.

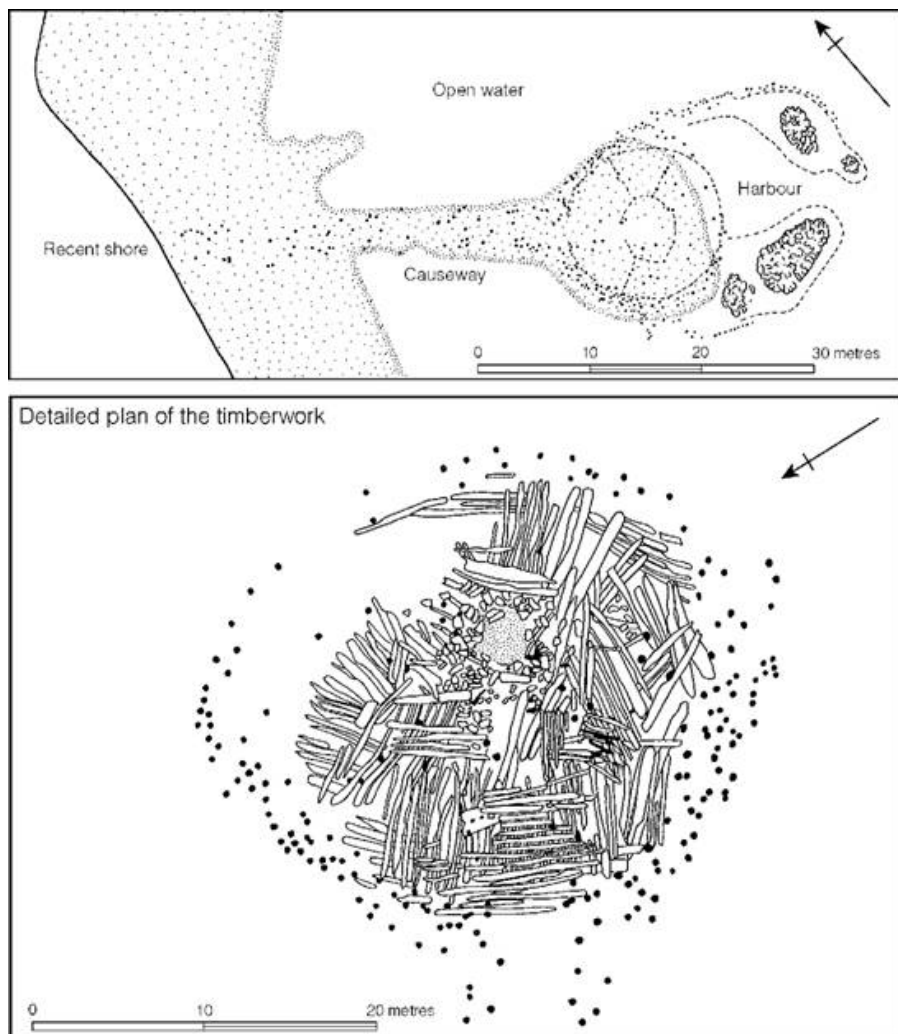


Figure 14.29 Milton Loch Crannog, Dumfries and Galloway Region
(source: C.M. Piggott 1955).

In all regions settlements show change with time. The eighth to

seventh centuries represent a horizon of transition noticeable in many regions with the emergence of large dominant circular houses. Later, in the fourth century, there is another widespread change, with settlements becoming more complex and in places enclosing earthworks being built to replace slighter boundaries. It was at about this time that more settlements were built and land was cleared for the first time, suggesting an expansion in population. Further widespread changes in the first century AD may, at least in part, have been caused by the proximity or the actual presence of the Roman army.

Since the 1970s there has been a dramatic enhancement in our knowledge of the Iron Age settlement of central and northern Britain. Although material-poor when compared with the south, the settlement archaeology is unusually rich not least because of the use of stone which, in the north-western region, provides a wealth of structural information, better preserved and more varied in its detail than any other region of Britain.

The way forward must now be to focus on thorough regional surveys linked to a programme of excavation and the systematic study of data, especially material culture, derived from earlier work. Already projects in the Outer Hebrides (Parker Pearson and Sharples 1998), Dumfriesshire (Halliday 2002) and Caithness (Heald and Jackson 2001) are making major advances in our understanding of the complexity of Iron Age settlement in its landscape setting. Through this approach the social dynamics of the disparate communities will begin to come into focus.

15

The development of hillforts and enclosed oppida

England, Scotland and Wales together can boast about 3,300 structures classed loosely under the heading of hillfort and other defended enclosures (Hogg 1979). Many more than half are small sites of 1.2 ha or less which need be little more than defended homesteads: these include the rounds of the south-west peninsula, the raths of south Wales and the numerous homesteads and small settlements of eastern Scotland. As a broad generalization it may be said that the bulk of the hillforts proper are concentrated in central southern England ([Figure 15.1](#)) in a broad band running from the south coast to north Wales. To the west the settlement pattern is dominated by the strongly defended homesteads while to the east single family farmsteads and undefended hamlets are the norm. Hillforts are essentially a specialized form of settlement: their size, complexity and siting suggests that they represent the communal effort of a large sector of the social group working under the coercive power of the leadership. If this is so then they represent a level of social organization above that of the farmstead and hamlet and may legitimately be considered as a separate phenomenon.

This said, some words of caution are necessary. The word 'hillfort' is a portmanteau term covering a variety of fortifications of differing sizes spanning 800 or 900 years. Given such broad parameters it is only to be expected that there will be, hidden within their structures, evidence of a range of functions varying with time and geographical location. Such variety can only dimly be appreciated because of the relative paucity of well-excavated data. While a large number of hillforts have suffered some form of excavation, very few have been examined on a large enough scale to enable their developing functions to be properly identified. In consequence, while theories and generalizations abound, hard evidence is difficult to come by.

The vast majority of those hillforts which have been 'excavated' have had their ramparts sectioned and sometimes their gates uncovered, but little else. In consequence there is a fair body of evidence reflecting upon hillfort defence which, with the advent of radiocarbon dating, can be presented in a broad chronological

perspective. A summary of the present state of knowledge will be given first. Using this evidence in conjunction with topographical and locational studies it is possible to offer, for some regions, a general assessment of hillfort development throughout the first millennium BC. This can be further enhanced with much rarer evidence derived from the sampling of hillfort interiors to throw some light on questions of function and social organization. Such an approach, focused on central southern Britain, will also be attempted later in this chapter.

The next level of abstraction – an assessment of the changing social and economic functions of hillforts – depends upon evidence derived from very few large-scale excavations. Some general comments will be offered in this chapter but the question will be returned to later in a rather broader context in [chapter 21](#).

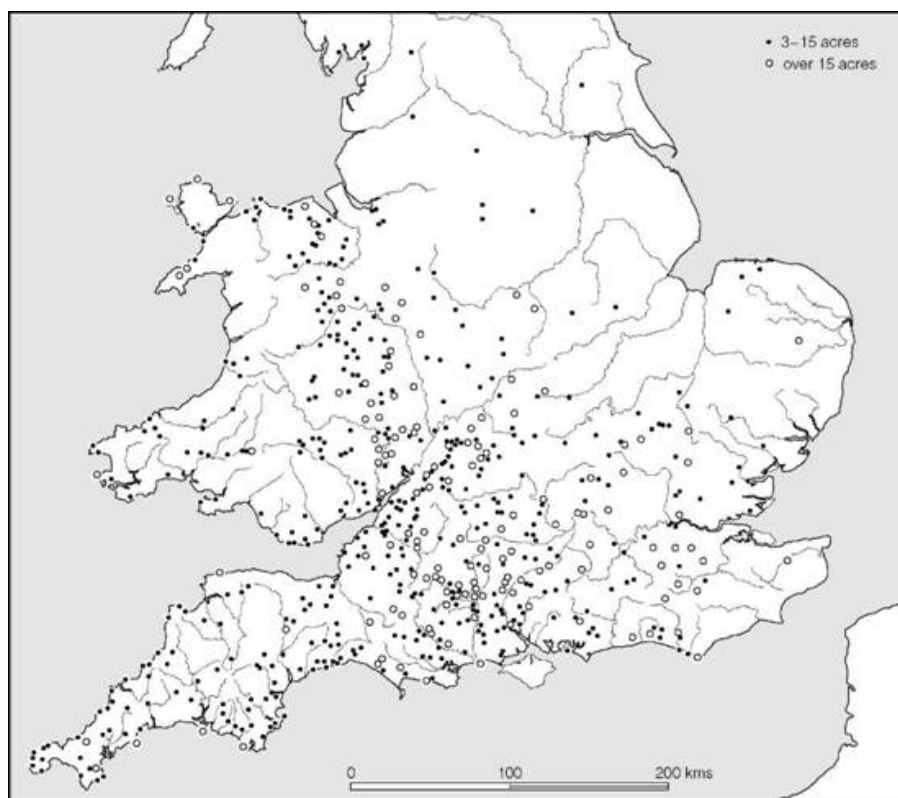


Figure 15.1 *Distribution of hillforts in southern Britain (source: Ordnance Survey, Map of Southern Britain in the Iron Age).*

Finally we will consider the end of the hillfort phenomenon and the

emergence of larger and more complex oppida.

The structure of hillfort defences

Between 100 and 200 hillforts have had their defences sectioned, exposing the structure of their ramparts. Unfortunately, many sites were dug before the subtleties of internal timber-work were understood and frequently the trenches were too narrow and too few to provide decisive evidence bearing on the presence or absence of internal structure. However, a number of sites have yielded useful results and this evidence can be synthesized into a general pattern of development relevant to most areas of the country (Avery 1993).

Earth and timber structures in England and Wales

Palisades

One of the earliest kinds of defensive barrier employed on sites of hillfort size was the palisade of close-set timbers embedded in a continuous foundation trench without ditches or the banking up of spoil behind. This is clearly the same technique as that used on the smaller settlements (discussed above, pp. 239–41), which developed out of a tradition of fencing going back to the beginning of the first millennium or earlier. Wherever excavation has been adequate, palisades, if they occur, can be shown to precede earthwork defences. At the Breiddin, Montgomery, a double palisade bedded in a shallow bank lies at the beginning of a complex development, and the evidence of associated finds and radiocarbon determinations suggest that a ninth- or even tenth- century date might not be out of place. At Moel y Gaer, Flints., one or more palisades are thought to pre-date a long development sequence and are probably related to a phase of settlement for which a date in the eighth or seventh century is indicated by radiocarbon determinations. A similar succession of palisades also preceded the construction of a rampart at Dinorben. The palisade at Blewburton Hill, Oxon., antedates by some time the construction of a timber-box rampart, and the same interpretation is possible for the foremost palisade at Bindon Hill, Dorset, and Hod Hill, Northants. At Woodbury Castle, Devon, Skelmore Heads, Lancs., Wilbury, Herts., and Eddisbury, Cheshire, short lengths of early palisades have been found, again in early contexts pre-dating the subsequent developments on these sites.

Although in the examples noted above the later defences generally follow the earlier palisades at the points excavated, there is no

positive proof that the lines were coincident throughout. The rather more extensive excavations at Hembury, Devon, have however demonstrated that here the defences of the later fort follow what appears to be an earlier palisade more or less exactly on at least two sides of the circuit ([Figure 15.2](#)). Admittedly, the interpretation of the sequence is not straightforward but the outer palisade would appear to be the earliest feature, since at the position occupied by the later east entrance it was refilled at the point where the new roadway crossed it. The inner 'palisade' may, however, be the fronting timbers of the earliest box rampart (Todd 1984). The implication here, then, is that the construction of the earthwork defences followed hard upon the abandonment of the palisade. Both the later entrances were placed close to the sites of the palisade entrances, but the digging of the later ditches has obscured some of the details. Even so, the outer palisades can be seen to curve back inwards and at the east entrance there is some evidence to suggest a timber structure within the incurve not at all unlike the towers of the second-period gates at Harehope in Peeblesshire.

Large palisaded enclosures can therefore be seen generally to precede hillforts, sometimes by a considerable period of time. Few absolute dates can yet be given but it is known from the smaller palisaded homesteads of the north that the method of defence was being practised in the eighth century (pp. 311–20) and the finds from the Breiddin point to an origin here going back a century or two earlier, an indication supported by the evidence from Moel y Gaer.

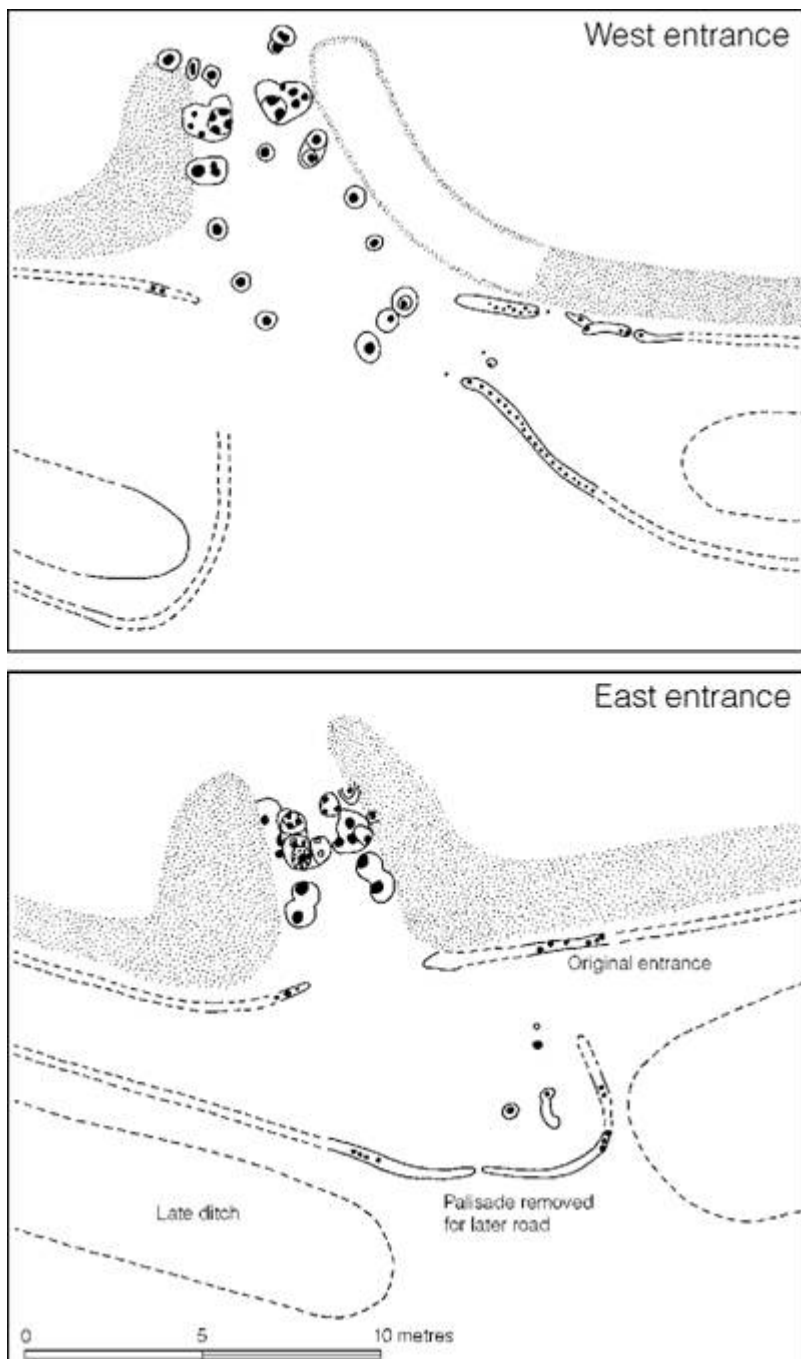


Figure 15.2 *The palisaded enclosure at Hembury, Devon (source: Liddell 1935a).*

The Ivinghoe Beacon style of timber strengthening (Figure 15.3)

In parallel with the palisaded enclosures a second type of defence developed, known at present from Ffridd Faldwyn, Montgomery, Ivinghoe Beacon, Bucks., Grimthorpe, Yorks., Castercliff, Lancs., and Dinorben, Denbigh. At Grimthorpe rubble and soil from a relatively shallow U- shaped ditch was retained between two rows of timber about 2.4 m apart, the timbers in each row being placed at about the same spacing, thus forming a rough grid which would have allowed cross-bracing to keep the structure rigid. Between the verticals of both the back and front rows one must imagine a close boarding of planks or halved timbers to prevent the rubble fill from spilling out. Although dating evidence is by no means decisive, it is now becoming clear that simple box ramparts probably pre-date the conventional beginning of the Iron Age. At Rams Hill, Berks., a radiocarbon series suggests that this type of construction should be dated to the twelfth century BC. The box ramparts at both Ffridd Faldwyn and Dinorben lie at the beginning of long development sequences: at Dinorben a series of radiocarbon dates from the most recent excavation (Guilbert 1979a, 1980) range from the eighth to the sixth centuries. Grimthorpe provided two early dates for bone samples recovered from the partially silted ditch spanning the thirteenth to the eighth centuries. The dates from Ivinghoe Beacon extend from the eighth to fifth centuries but the metalwork from the fort lies within the eighth to seventh centuries. At Hunsbury, Northants, the box rampart was added in front of an existing palisade which remained in use. Radiocarbon dates suggest construction between the eighth and fourth centuries BC. Finally the box rampart from Castercliff produced radiocarbon dates suggestive of a seventh- or sixth- century construction. Taking this evidence together, there is a degree of consistency about the overall pattern, suggesting initial occupation in the twelfth to sixth centuries. Thus the earliest hillforts in Britain must have developed in parallel with those of the European Urnfield cultures. Strictly, the box rampart could be thought of as a double palisade, of the type well represented in northern Britain (pp. 313–15), filled with earth and rubble. The nature of this relationship both structurally and chronologically remains to be further examined.

The Hollingbury Camp style of timber strengthening (Figure 15.3)

A simple development following the rubble-filled timber wall of Ivinghoe Beacon type was the addition of a sloping rampart behind the inner face of the inner row of timbers. This would have provided

two additional advantages: ease of access at all points and an added strength and rigidity. While at Hollingbury Camp, Sussex, the bank was slight – barely 2.7 m wide – backing a timber wall of the same width, in the first phase of Danebury, Hants, the 2.1 m wide timbering was backed by a far more substantial structure almost 9 m wide. At Maiden Castle, Dorset, the timber structure of period I was 3.6 m wide, with a bank of equivalent width behind, standing to a maximum height of 1.4 m, while at South Cadbury, Somerset, the earliest rampart measured in total width 4.4 m, the distance between the two faces of the timber structure being only 2.2 m. At Blewburton, Oxon., the total width of the rampart was 6.4 m, the distance between the two timber rows being 4.0 m. While at Winklebury, Hants, the overall width of the rampart was about 3 m while the two timber faces were only 2 m apart. Clearly, there were considerable variations in proportion.

Wandlebury, Cambs., is a useful example in demonstrating a sequence of development ([Figure 15.4](#)). In the first period a box-type rampart was constructed with timber faces 4.0 m apart, the front timbers being placed at 0.76 m intervals, and those of the back face even closer. Whether or not a backing ramp was built will never be known, since a later ditch would have dug it away. In the second phase the rampart was rebuilt 4.3 m wide, with the timbers in both rows set at 2.7 m centres, again possibly with a backing rampart. In the third major phase a totally new rampart was thrown up *behind* the original work, and was fronted by a ditch. This third-period work was constructed in a style to be described below as the Poundbury style. Thus, what was presumably a Hollingbury type of rampart had an extended use at Wandlebury. Its replacement is, however, a reminder that timber had a relatively short life and major rebuilding would have had to be carried out perhaps as often as every decade or two if the defences were to be kept in good order.

Timber faced ramparts

Ivinghoe Beacon, Bucks

Grimthorpe, Yorks

Hollingbury, Sussex

Maiden Castle, Dorset

Moel Y Gaer, Flint

Hod Hill, Dorset

Poundbury, Dorset

0 50 100 metres

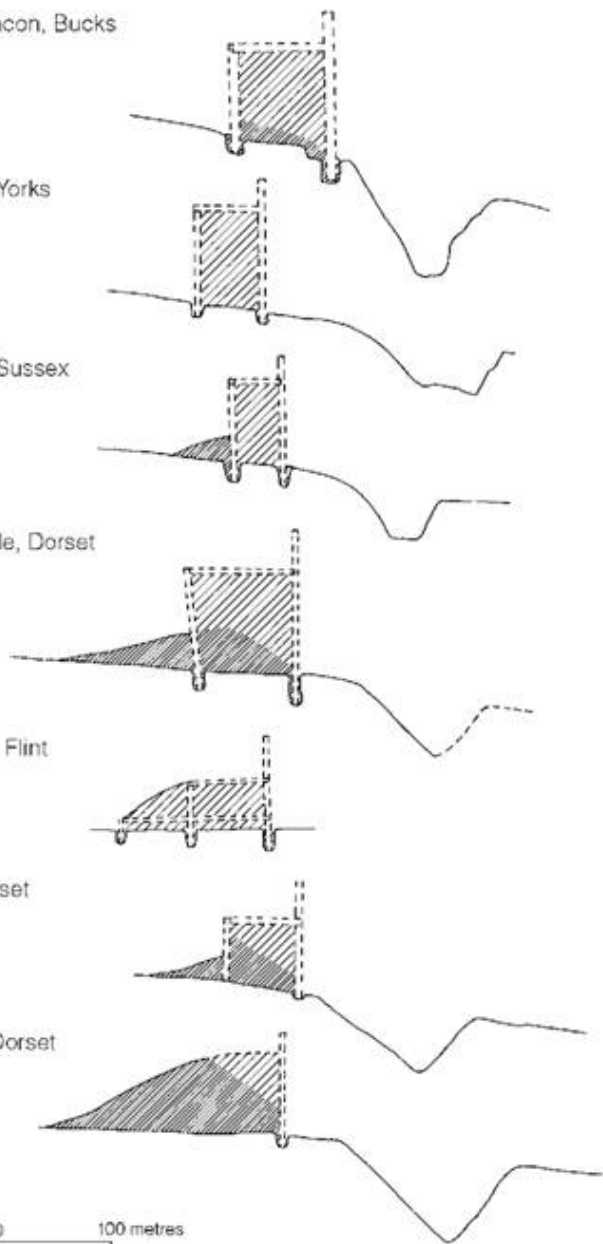


Figure 15.3 Comparative sections of box ramparts and their derivatives (sources: Ivinghoe Beacon, Cotton and Frere 1968; Grimthorpe, Stead 1968; Hollingbury Camp, E.C. Curwen 1932; Maiden Castle, Wheeler 1943; Moel y Gaer, Guilbert 1975a; Hod Hill, Richmond 1968; Poundbury, Richardson 1940).

The dating of this type of construction technique is tolerably well known. At Hollingbury Camp pottery of the seventh to fifth centuries has been found within the fort, but not in direct relationship to the rampart, while at most of the other sites the associated material lies consistently within the sixth- to third-century range.

The Moel y Gaer style of timber strengthening (Figure 15.3)

Area stripping of a length of the rampart of Moel y Gaer has produced startling results. Here the earliest rampart was faced with upright timbers 0.6–0.9 m apart, the gaps between being infilled with dry-stone walling, usually incorporating large orthostats. The inner row of timbers, which the excavator considers was merely a curb and an anchor for horizontal lacing timbers, was 6 m from the outer row, but a more widely spaced middle row was found, probably representing the main vertical supports to which the front revetting was tied. The rampart was sufficiently well preserved to suggest that it stood originally to a height of 1.7 m, above which there would probably have been a breastwork. Careful excavation of the rampart body showed that it had originally been divided, front to back, probably by hurdles, to create a series of compartments which were filled with different tips of rubble. A cellular structure of this kind would have been particularly valuable in containing the rampart when repairs to the front face became necessary.

The Moel y Gaer style of rampart construction differs from the typical Hollingbury style in that the main anchor timbers for the front face were widely spaced and the tail of the rampart was revetted with close-spaced verticals which may also have served to give a rigidity to the timber structure. Had a substantial length of rampart not been excavated, it is unlikely that the middle row of structural timbers would have been found. With this in mind it is possible that the rampart of Buckland Rings, Hants, should be placed in this category. Here limited excavation suggested two rows of timbers 5.8 m apart, set within an earthwork of 9 m width overall. The distance between the timber rows is excessive for simple cross-bracing, but if a middle row of more widely spaced timbers had occurred, as at Moel y Gaer, the problem would not have existed. In this context, Breedon-on-the-Hill, Leics., should also be considered. In the first phase, the fronting fence was of closely spaced timbers, with the tail of the rampart 7.6 m away, revetted by individually bedded posts. The excavation trenches were too narrow to have been sure to have picked up a middle row of widely spaced timbers, if this had existed, and no cross-bracing was

noted, but superficial similarities to Moel y Gaer suggest that Breedon-on-the-Hill may well have been of the same type. Caesar's Camp (Wimbledon), Surrey, poses a similar problem. Two narrow sections observed under rescue conditions brought to light evidence of front and rear timbers 8.2 m apart, but no middle row was noted. Once more the distance apart is probably too great for simple cross-bracing and a more complex structure of Moel y Gaer type might be anticipated.

The construction of the Moel y Gaer rampart post-dates two samples dated by radiocarbon to between the eighth and sixth centuries.

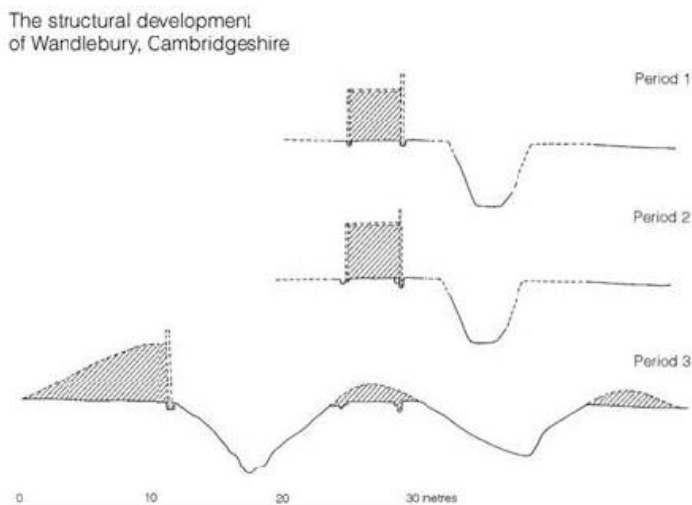


Figure 15.4 *The development of the defences at Wandlebury, Cambridgeshire (source: Hartley 1957).*

The Hod Hill type of timber strengthening (Figure 15.3)

The first phase of the defences of Hod Hill, Dorset, possessed an internal structure at present unique. A rampart some 9.7 m wide was fronted by a continuous palisade trench in which were placed vertical timbers, no doubt backed by horizontal timber cladding. Within the body of the mound was found a second row of individual timbers, the bases of which did not penetrate the natural subsoil; to these the front fence would presumably have been anchored. The defences differ from the more normal Hollingbury Camp type in that the inner timbers were supported only by the spoil of the rampart itself. In an excavation less skilfully observed, they might well have passed

unnoticed.

It is tempting to see the constructors of Hod Hill adapting time-honoured building methods in the realization that the inner timbers were needed only to anchor the fronting fence, post-holes specially cut into the bedrock being no longer required. Strictly the Hod Hill structure is only a variant of the Moel y Gaer style.

The Poundbury type of timber strengthening(Figure 15.3)

The logical development following the breakthrough at Hod Hill was to modify further the nature of the inner timbering. At Poundbury, Dorset, excavations demonstrated a 9 m wide rampart fronted by a palisade of closely spaced timbers 1 m apart. No trace of internal timber-ing, either vertical or horizontal, was seen. It may, of course, be that the trenches were so sited as to miss inner verticals, but this is unlikely. A more reasonable explanation is that the front face was attached only to horizontal beams embedded within the body of the rampart: these would have been extremely difficult to trace and would have appeared only under ideal conditions. It is inconceivable that the fence could have withstood the thrust without some such back-pinning. As with the Hod Hill type of construction, it could be that the Poundbury type was simply a variant of the Moel y Gaer style.

The third phase of Wandlebury, Cambs., which demonstrably replaces the rampart of Holling-bury type, was of a similar construction. The same technique appears to have been adopted at Yarnbury, Wilts., Bury Hill I, Hants, Titterstone Clee, Salop, and Cissbury, Sussex.

The dating of the Poundbury technique is difficult to ascertain with precision: at Wandlebury it is later than the Hollingbury style and associated with pottery which could centre upon the sixth to fourth centuries. The evidence from the other sites, such as it is, does not conflict with this broad generalization.

The glaxis style

In the constructional variations described, the overriding consideration was to provide a vertical wall of timber confronting the outside world, usually protected by a ditch dug some metres in front of it. Yet, however the backing structure was modified, the basic flaws in design remained: the timber would soon rot and would have to be replaced (a difficult task in such circumstances); it could easily be

fired by an enemy; and the gradually crumbling lip of the ditch would eventually loosen the fronting timbers. Nor should we overlook the considerable labour involved in providing timber for defensive circuits (Manning 1999).

All these problems were overcome by a new method which appears to have been widely adopted in the south and east some time in the fourth century or soon after. Ditches were dug deeper and the rampart face was sheered back at an angle following the ditch side, thus creating a continuous slope from the bottom of the ditch to the crest of the rampart at an angle of 30–45°. At Hod Hill, Dorset, the overall distance from top to bottom was 17.4 m and at Danebury, Hants (Figure 15.5), 16.1 m, while at Maiden Castle, Dorset, it reached 25.2 m. Covered with a loose scree and capped by a breastwork of timber or flint, the approach would have been daunting to the attacker. The only maintenance problem was to keep the ditch clear of silt. This would have been undertaken periodically, the scree being thrown out on the downhill side creating a spoil bank sometimes referred to as a counterscarp. In one section at Danebury, it was possible to trace evidence of eleven different additions to the counterscarp, each representing a periodic clearing-out operation.

Glacis-style defences can be shown to replace timber structures at a number of sites from the Dorset forts of Poundbury, Maiden Castle and Hod Hill and the Somerset site of South Cadbury to as far north as Hunsbury in Northamptonshire and Breedon-on-the-Hill in Leicestershire, and it will be shown below (p. 359) that some early stone-built forts were also remodelled in this way. Dating evidence, where it survives, shows that glacis defences were in use in the south during the time when saucepan-style pots were being manufactured, centring therefore on the Middle Iron Age (fourth to second centuries); but at Croft Ambrey, Herefordshire, and Midsummer Hill, Worcestershire, in the Welsh borderland, dump-constructed ramparts were made at the beginning of the occupation sequence, which probably started in the fifth or even the sixth century. There is evidence from the south that here too dump ramparts without revetting were established by the eighth century. Such a rampart was found at Barksbury, Hants, in an eighth- to seventh-century context, at Quarley Hill and Woolbury, Hants, and Vespasian's Camp, Wilts., dating to the fifth to fourth centuries, and at St Catharine's Hill, Hants, a little later. On present evidence, therefore, it is simpler to assume that the technique of defending a site with a bank of spoil and a ditch was long established, dating back into the second millennium, and that after a brief period when timber- and stone-faced ramparts predominated, the older technique came back once more into common use and persisted in some areas until the Roman Conquest.



Figure 15.5 *The defensive ditch at Danebury, Hants (photograph: David Leigh, Danebury Trust).*

At Maiden Castle six subsequent extensions and modifications all adopted the basic glacis style, and at Hod Hill there were three phases. Evidently the glacis was regarded as the ultimate in defensive tactics until the wide flat-bottomed ditches of Fécamp style were introduced in the first century AD (p. 402).

Multivallation

Superficial surface examination of the British hillforts shows that many of them were provided with more than one rampart and ditch; such forts are listed on the Ordnance Survey *Map of Southern Britain in the Iron Age* as multivallate. The term is confusing, however, for it covers several different situations. The multiple-enclosure forts of the south-west, while strictly multi-vallate, were so because extra lines of banks and ditches were required to enclose space for livestock. Other forts like Wandlebury, Cambs., Danebury, Hants, Bredon Hill, Worcs., the Caburn, Sussex, and Croft Ambrey, Heref. and Worcs., give the appearance of multivallation because of their growth or shrinkage and not necessarily from a general policy of extending the line of fire. Thus, surface assessment alone can seldom be decisive. Nevertheless, deliberate multivallation for the purpose of defence can be demonstrated on sites like Maiden Castle, Dorset, beginning in phase III and reaching its ultimate development in phase IV ([Figure 15.6](#)). At Hod Hill, Dorset, it is possible to trace the development of multivallation, starting in stage IIa (the first glacial remodelling) with the construction of a palisade in front of the ditch. Subsequently a second ditch was begun but not finished, the spoil being thrown up over the line of the palisade, which was now isolated between the two ditches. Whether or not the palisade belongs to stage IIa, the fact remains that multivallation came late in the development of the fort and, as the excavator has suggested, may have been initiated and subsequently abandoned at the time of the Roman advance in AD 43.

A somewhat similar situation occurred at Buckland Rings, Hants, where, in spite of large-scale levelling, it was possible to trace a fence outside the line of the inner ditch and in front of an outer ditch. No evidence of a rampart behind or sealing the fence-posts survived. At what stage the outer features were constructed it is impossible to say, but in all probability they were added to the original construction, and it is possible that the Buckland Rings sequence is a direct parallel to Hod Hill. The occurrence, at Moel y Gaer, of a palisade of timbers set in a shallow bank outside the ditch, which may be contemporary with the rampart, is a reminder that outer palisades may well prove to be more widespread than has hitherto been appreciated.

Generally it may be assumed that multivallation was a late development in most areas, sometimes – as at Hod Hill – not appearing until the first century AD but probably at least a century earlier at Maiden Castle and South Cadbury. At Rainsborough Camp, Northants, it has been argued that the second rampart and ditch date to as early as the fifth century, but the evidence can be variously interpreted and is best regarded as unproven.

In all probability, development varied in different areas of the country and in different geographical situations. Two or three banks and ditches thrown across a neck of land to protect a promontory do not necessarily have to be related to the same time, or philosophy of display or warfare, as the multiple girding of Maiden Castle and South Cadbury. Thus, while most true multivallation was late, one may expect considerable variation between one part of the country and another. One final point is clear: there is now no need to suggest that intrusive ideas were the cause – local inventiveness is quite sufficient.



Figure 15.6 Maiden Castle, Dorset (photograph: Major G.W. Allen. Copyright, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford).

Chevaux-de-Frise

A few forts in Wales and northern Britain were provided with an additional form of barrier commonly known as *chevaux-de-frise*, a term used to describe zones of obstacles, usually stones, set upright in the ground to make access to the fort by men and horses more difficult. The stones vary in height, but average 0.60–1.0 m and were sited either in discrete areas, where the approach was easiest, or in continuous zones, in front of the defences. The most extensively

excavated example is at Castell Henllys, Pembs., where a zone of upright stones was found well preserved beneath a later bank. The miniature nature of the barrier (the stones are barely 0.3 m high) and the careful choice of grey shale and white quartzite might suggest that the barrier was more symbolic and prestigious than functional.

In all, only five examples of *chevaux-de-frise* have been identified in Scotland and three in Wales (e.g. Mytum and Webster 1989), but it is possible, as Harbison has pointed out (1971), that many more may have existed in wood. No firm dating evidence exists, but the example at

Kaimes Hill, Midlothian, is unlikely to be far removed in date from the date of the second rampart, for which there is a radiocarbon assessment in the fifth or fourth century.

Stone and stone-and-timber defences in England and Wales(Figures 15.7 and 15.8)

Although palisaded structures were constructed in areas where good building stone occurs naturally, later developments in these regions usually adopted the technique of dry-stone walling, with or without internal timber binding. Unfortunately, horizontal timbers are far less easy to trace archaeologically than verticals, and it is therefore a distinct possibility that a higher proportion of the stone-faced ramparts were timber-laced than is at present apparent. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this discussion a distinction will be made between those where no timbering was observed and those known to have been timber-laced.

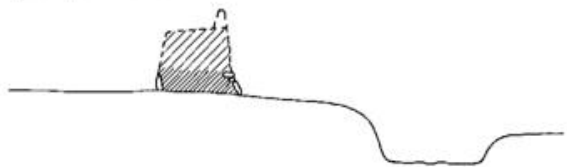
One of the earliest of the simple forts possessing a rubble rampart encased at the front and back with dry-stone walling is Chalbury, Dorset (Figure 15.7), where the total thickness of the rampart was 6 m. Since associated pottery leaves little doubt that the defences belong to the sixth to fifth centuries, Chalbury is presumably the stone-built equivalent of the timber-box rampart of Maiden Castle I, only 5 km away. An earlier date in the sixth century can now be proposed for the first fort at Rainsborough Camp, Northants (Figure 15.7), where the stone- faced rampart, 5.2 m wide at the base, was reduced in width by two steps at the back. The excavator's suggestion that a similar stepping was adopted at the front carries less conviction. The thickness of the ramparts between the wall faces varies from fort to fort but is usually between 5.9 and 7.4 m. The enclosure at Bathampton Down, Somerset, was however protected by a wall only 2.9 m wide, divided by a 3.6 m berm from a wide flat-bottomed ditch. At Mam Tor, Derbyshire, the wall faces were 3.6 m apart, while at Worlebury, Somerset (Figure 15.7), the overall thickness of the main stone wall was 11.5 m; but this was apparently created by several

additions or rebuildings at the back and front of a wall of normal width.

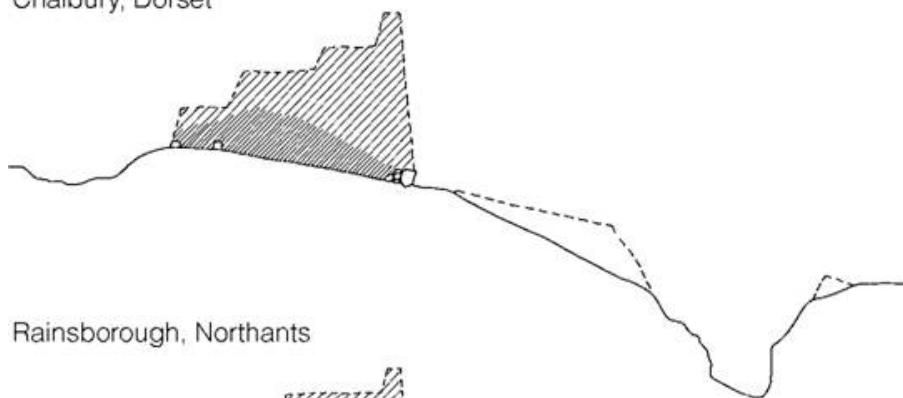
At several sites in the south, stone-structured ramparts were replaced by glacis-style defences. This is particularly well demonstrated at Llanmelin, Mon., and at Rainsborough Camp; in both cases, excavation has shown that the major remodelling in glacis style came late in the occupation of the site. One apparent exception to the rule is the much-quoted Bredon Hill, Worcs.; here the usual interpretation is that the inner rampart, built in a dump-constructed or glacis style, was followed by the outer rampart, stone-faced and fronted by a berm and U-shaped ditch. There are difficulties with this interpretation, not the least being that the two entrances through the outer rampart were almost blocked by the inner defences. If, however, the supposed constructional sequence is reversed, this problem would be overcome and the development of the rampart styles – first stone-faced then glacis – would be in accordance with the general pattern elsewhere, Bredon Hill being no longer the exception. The fact that the outer rampart and ditch were sited opposite the entrance in the inner rampart might be thought to provide further support for the reinterpretation.

Outside the south and east of Britain, the stone facing of the rampart seems to have survived to the time of the Roman invasion. In north-west Wales, Tre'r Ceiri, Garn Boduan, Carn Fadrun and Conway Mountain in Caernarvonshire all maintained their stone wall defences until the last, but the glacis style was adopted at some of the Welsh borderland sites like the Wrekin, Salop, and Croft Ambrey, Heref. and Worcs., and even penetrated as far north as Dinorben, Denbigh.

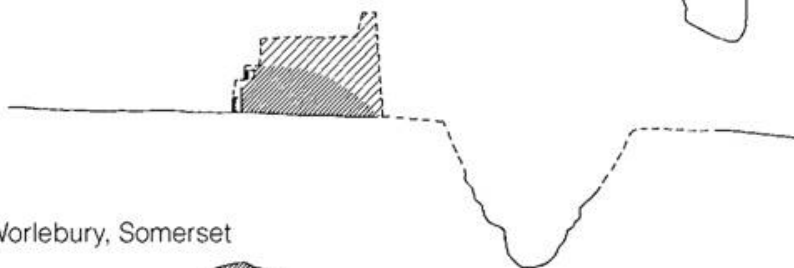
Bathampton, Somerset



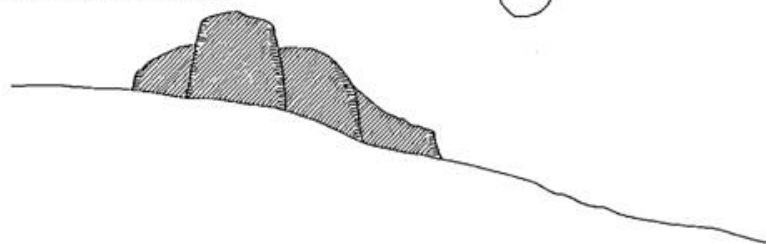
Chalbury, Dorset



Rainsborough, Northants



Worlebury, Somerset



0 10 20 metres

Figure 15.7 Stone-faced ramparts (sources: Bathampton, Wainwright 1967b; Chalbury, Whitley 1943; Rainsborough, Avery, Sutton and Banks 1967; Worlebury, Dymond 1902).

A combination of timbering and stone facing has been recorded on several southern British sites close to stone outcrops. In the outworks of the phase II east entrance at Maiden Castle, Dorset, dry-stone facing was employed instead of split timber or planks as a revetting material between vertical timbers erected in the general tradition of the timber-box rampart of the first period; and at South Cadbury,

Somerset, exactly the same technique was employed. It should be emphasized that in both cases stone walling was being used only as a filling material in place of timber and not as an integral part of the rigid structure. This is essentially a local variation of the timber-box-constructed rampart, in areas where stone was readily available.

Further west and north, in an arc spreading from the Cotswolds through the Welsh borderland and Cheshire into Yorkshire, a series of partially excavated forts provide clear evidence of the use of timber and stone-structured ramparts. Some of the forts like Castle Ditch (Eddisbury), Cheshire ([Figure 15.8](#)), Dinorben, Moel y Gaer, Flints., and Ffridd Faldwyn, Montgomery, began as simple palisaded enclosures which were replaced by box-constructed timber ramparts employing vertical and horizontal timbering. Between the front verticals infilling was usually by dry-stone walling in the manner of South Cadbury and Maiden Castle. The same technique was used in the first and second phases of the rampart at Castle Hill (Almondbury), Yorks. ([Figure 15.8](#)). All, except for Dinorben, were later rebuilt using a rubble rampart laced with horizontal timbers, which in the case of Castle Ditches, Ffridd Faldwyn and Castle Hill was fronted, both inside and out, by dry-stone walling unbroken by timber verticals: the second phase of the rampart at Moel y Gaer does not however appear to have been stone-faced. The rebuilding of the Moel y Gaer rampart in this style post-dates a radiocarbon assessment of the fourth to third centuries.

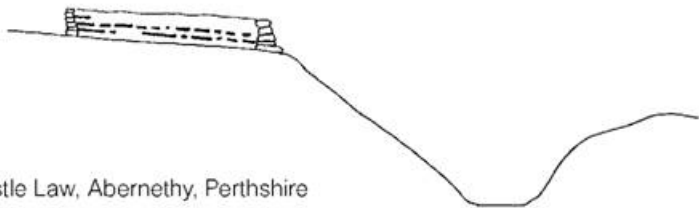
Some of the forts in the west and north, such as Leckhampton Hill and Crickley Hill in Gloucestershire, Maiden Castle (Bickerton) in Cheshire ([Figure 15.8](#)), and Corley Camp in Warwickshire, began with horizontally timber-laced ramparts fronted by continuous dry-stone facings and many underwent subsequent modification.

The sequence at Crickley Hill, Glos., is particularly interesting. In the first defensive phase (the excavator's period 2) the rampart appears to have been constructed in a composite form, with two rows of vertical timbers 2.1 m apart, giving rigidity to a rubble core which was laced with horizontal timbers and faced back and front with dry-stone walling, the timber ends projecting into the outer stone face. The overall width between the stone facing was 5.8 m. It is very tempting to interpret Crickley as a transitional type representing a stage between box-structured ramparts and timber-laced types. In theory all the builders have done here is to move the stone infilling of a conventional box-structured rampart outwards, away from the vertical timbers, perhaps to give more protection to the otherwise exposed woodwork. It would soon have been realized that the internal verticals were of little significance to the rigidity of the structure and could in future be omitted. This theory, while attractive, is difficult to

substantiate. In a subsequent phase of rebuilding at Crickley (period 3b), when the wall was in part thickened and a hornwork constructed in front of the gate, only horizontal timbering appears to have been used (Figure 15.16).

From the above description, it will be seen that the use of stone and timber followed a series of complex patterns which are only now being gradually sorted out. Tentatively, however, we may define a phase in which stone was used as an infilling material in box-constructed ramparts of Ivinghoe Beacon and Hollingbury Camp type, spanning the period from the seventh to the fourth century. In the west and north of England, the technique of lacing the ramparts with horizontal timbers and facing them back and front with stone walls soon emerged locally, probably as a development from the earlier style. The dating evidence, such as it is, shows that the technique was being practised from the sixth to the third centuries. Eventually the use of horizontal timbers was abandoned and ramparts were built with stone facings only, in a simple style which probably originated earlier and continued in use in some parts throughout the Iron Age. Finally, in southern England and occasionally elsewhere, stone-constructed ramparts were eventually replaced by the glacis style. At present this generalized scheme fits all available evidence but regional and chronological differences may be expected to complicate the issue.

Castle Hill, Almondbury, Yorkshire



Castle Law, Abernethy, Perthshire



Maiden Castle, Bickerton, Cheshire



Castle Ditch, Eddisbury, Cheshire



Crickley Hill, Gloucestershire

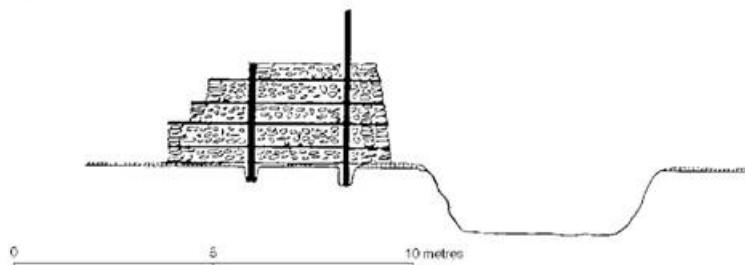


Figure 15.8 Sections and elevations of stone- and timber-laced ramparts (sources: various).

The stone and timber forts of Scotland

The Scottish hillfort development is in some respects different from that of the rest of Britain. Like the south, some forts began as palisaded enclosures, but after these had gone out of use, vertical timbering is virtually unknown again except in the gate at Cullykhan, where a date in the fifth century is indicated by a radiocarbon

assessment. In the north the characteristic rampart structure consists of a rubble-and-earth core faced inside and out with dry-stone walling, the whole bonded by rows of horizontal timbers which project through the outer, and sometimes the inner, wall-face. At Abernethy, Perth, two rows of rectangular beam-holes 0.24–0.30 m square appeared through the outer wall-facing of the innermost rampart: the lower row was 0.60–0.90 m above the ground, the second row 0.60 m above the first. The outer rampart proved to be of the same construction, but in neither the inner nor the outer rampart did the timbers penetrate the inner wall-facing. It is impossible to say how extensive the use of longitudinal timbering was, since only at Abernethy are the timbers recorded. Ditches do not seem to have been an integral part of this kind of defensive scheme.

Half a dozen or so forts have produced direct evidence of timber-lacing but more than sixty of the Scottish sites belong to what is called the vitrified class, all examples showing signs of widespread burning of the timber-lacing causing the core material of the rampart to become discoloured and to fuse. The exact nature of the timber structure of most of these forts has not been recorded, but at Finavon and Monifieth in Angus, and Castle Law (Forgondenny), Perth – all forts timber-laced in the Abernethy style – vitrified material was found in the rampart cores. In all probability, therefore, we are dealing with a single class of horizontally timber-laced ramparts, some of which were fired. Whether the firing was deliberately carried out by the builders to consolidate the rampart, or by attackers, is a matter of some debate (summarized in Cotton 1955, 94–101, and MacKie 1976), but the potentially destructive nature of a fire, the unevenness of the firing within individual sites, and the relatively slight firing of many of them would suggest accident or attack rather than design. These vitrified forts should be compared with the burnt timber-laced ramparts of the west, e.g. Dinorben, Denbigh., Crickley Hill and Leckhampton Hill, Glos., and Bower Walls Camp, Somerset, where the limestone rubble cores have been turned to lime by the intensive heat.

There has been much discussion as to the date and origin of the Scottish forts (Cotton 1955) but most of it is now rendered obsolete by the advent of radiocarbon dating (MacKie 1969a). For charred beams or planks from behind the wall at Finavon a seventh-century date was obtained, with supporting dates spanning the sixth to third centuries for subsequent levels. At the vitrified fort of Dun Lagaidh, Wester Ross, a carbonized branch under the fort wall suggested a date in the sixth century but at Craigmarloch Wood in Renfrewshire a date of the first century AD was obtained, apparently for a timber-laced rampart which replaced a palisaded enclosure. The sample does not, however, seem to have been securely linked to the construction period and

charcoal from beneath the wall provided a date in the eighth century. Finally at Craig Phadrig, Inverness, dates spanning the fifth to first centuries BC were obtained for charcoal associated with the vitrified rampart of the fort. Together the evidence is impressive: there can now be little doubt that many of the forts must originate in the seventh or even the eighth century, while the discovery of La Tène artefacts from some of the excavated examples, together with the Craig Phadrig dates, shows that occupation continued for several centuries during which time new forts were being built.

The Abernethy style forts originate, therefore, at the time when contacts between Scotland and the Hallstatt cultures of Europe were at their height. Similarities have been noted (Piggott 1966, 7) between the Scottish style of timber-lacing and the method employed on the Swiss site of Wittnauer Horn in both its Hallstatt B3 (Late Urnfield) and its Hallstatt C/D phases, and at Montlingerberg, another Late Urnfield fort in Switzerland. It is indeed tempting to suggest that the concept of using only horizontal timbers together with dry-stone walling was introduced into northern Britain from Continental Europe at the time of these maximum cultural contacts, but positive evidence is lacking.

Not all the Scottish forts were provided with timber-laced ramparts. Several of the fortified enclosures examined in the Cheviots, including Hownam Rings, Hayhope Knowe and Bonchester Hill in Roxburghshire, were enclosed by simple stone-faced ramparts without internal timbering. At Kaimes Hill, Midlothian, the excavations have demonstrated the replacement of a timber-laced rampart with a simple stone-faced structure; radiocarbon dates for twigs from the rampart core suggest a fourth-century date for the change in style at this site.

Summary of hillfort defences

Controlled excavation, together with a substantial series of radiocarbon dates, is beginning to demonstrate a sequence for the development of defensive structures which is consistent over the whole country. The tradition of building defensive palisades appeared in most parts of Britain by the ninth century and continued to be employed probably into the seventh. In the south of Britain, including Wales, the use of palisades runs parallel with the construction of box-framed earth and timber ramparts of Ivinghoe type, which developed a backing rampart (Hollingbury and Moel y Gaer styles) by or soon after the sixth century. At present these types, incorporating vertical timbers, are unknown in the north. The seventh century saw the appearance in Scotland of the timber-laced rampart with external stone faces, a style of construction which was also adopted in western

Britain as far south as the Bristol Avon. Which area, if any, can claim priority in the use of timber-lacing is uncertain. On one hand, it could be argued that the technique was introduced into Scotland from abroad, spreading to the south later, but an equally plausible explanation is that it was a British invention originating somewhere in the Cotswolds–Welsh border area out of the box rampart idea. At present this latter hypothesis seems the more reasonable, but the matter will only be solved when more closely dated examples become available.

By the fourth century timber-lacing had ceased to be practised, and over most of the stone-producing areas of northern and western Britain ramparts were constructed simply of stone-faced rubble. In the south, however, the vertical revetment of ramparts with close-spaced timbers persisted (Hod Hill and Poundbury types) probably throughout the fifth and even into the fourth century. During the fourth or third century old-established methods of building ramparts from dumped earth with a sloping face became widespread over much of the south and parts of the south-west. Eventually, by the first century AD, a new type of flat-bottomed ditch (Fécamp type) was introduced into the south-east, possibly from northern Gaul.

Entrances

Hillforts were provided with one or, less usually, two entrances. Since entrances were necessarily the weak links of the defensive circuit it is hardly surprising that much care and attention were lavished on these points, the entrances frequently being remodelled and rebuilt on more occasions than the main lines of the defences. A substantial number of entrances have been excavated on a reasonable scale. These, together with an examination of the earthworks of unexcavated examples, allow some general inferences to be drawn, and collated sequences can now be built up for the chalk downs of the south and the Welsh borderland.

In the south, two sites, Torberry in Sussex and Danebury in Hampshire, offer continuous sequences spanning the period from the fifth to the first century BC. These can be used in conjunction with the results from other excavations to produce a consistent picture of entrance development relevant for most of the south-east of the country.

One of the earliest known gates, that belonging to the hillfort of Ivinghoe Beacon, Bucks., is a relatively simple structure consisting of a short timber-lined passageway 3.4 m long and of equivalent width, set back slightly at the end of a courtyard formed by turning the ends of the ditch inwards ([Figure 15.9](#)). The exact arrangement is not

altogether clear but in all probability the rampart abutted on the timbers flanking the passage, although the possibility of additional side passages cannot be ruled out. An even simpler timber structure was provided at the east gate of Hollingbury Camp, Sussex (Figure 15.9). Two vertical timbers 3.7 m apart were set at the inner side of a gap in the box-constructed rampart; on them the gates would have been hung. This arrangement is exactly comparable to the first gate of Danebury, which probably dates to the sixth to fifth centuries (Figure 15.9).

The second phase at Danebury represents the development of a more complex gate (Figure 15.10), embodying the idea of the dual-portal carriageway, which was maintained in use throughout several phases of rebuilding. Gates of almost exactly similar plan were in use in the first phases of St Catharine's Hill, Hants, and at the Trundle, Sussex. A simpler form of the same basic concept, but with only a single passageway, was found in the first period at Torberry in the rampart which cut off the neck of the promontory defining the original defended area. The entrance, which lay on the north side of the ridge below the crest, consisted of a simple gap in the rampart, the ends being revetted with a continuous palisade of posts, with the large post-holes for the gate set a little in front, about 1.5 m apart. The ditch-ends were askew to each other so that the approach would have to be oblique. From the gate-posts shallow palisade trenches ran forward to the ditch-ends. This same type of arrangement can be traced, with modifications, at Quarley Hill, Hants, and at Yarnbury, Wilts. The main feature of both the dual- and single-portal entrances is that the gates themselves were set halfway along the entrance passage on line with the rest of the ramparts. Dating is fairly consistent: on the basis of sequence and associated pottery they should fall within the fifth century, possibly lasting into the fourth.

In the second period at Torberry the earthwork was carried around the summit of the hill, enclosing about 2.2 ha. The first entrance continued to be used at this time but in the third period the cross-defence and entrance were abandoned and partly dismantled, while the fort was extended eastwards, continuing the contour works of the second period along the sides of the ridge and enclosing a further 1.2 ha. The entrance through the new circuit lay on the axis of the ridge. In its original form the ditch-ends were placed askew to each other to form an oblique approach, but other details were obscured except for a row of posts which would have revetted one of the rampart-ends, creating a passageway 15–18 m long. The exact siting of the gate at this stage has been lost. The intention of the new entrance is, however, clear enough: the creation of a defended corridor extending into the fort between the rampart ends.

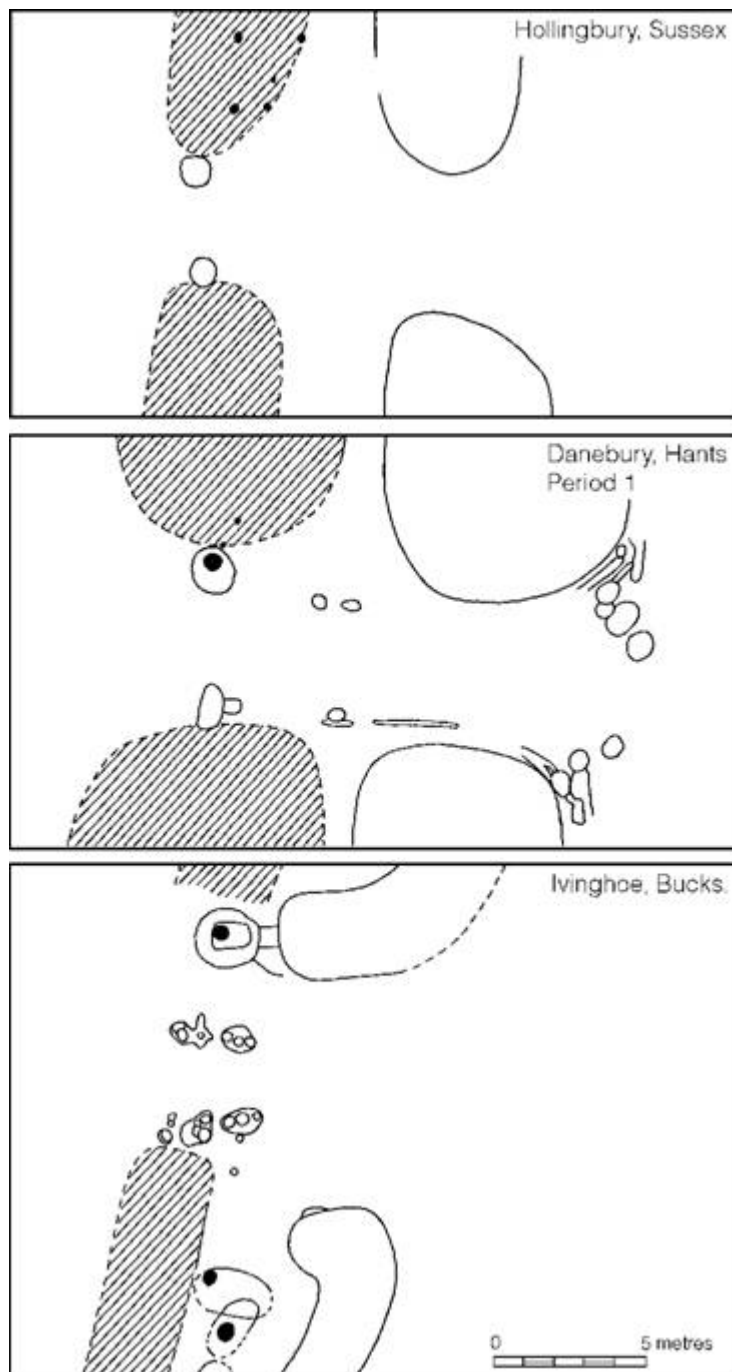


Figure 15.9 Single-portal entrances (sources: Hollingbury Camp, E.C. Curwen 1932; Danebury, Cunliffe 1972a; Ivinghoe Beacon, Cotton and Frere 1968).

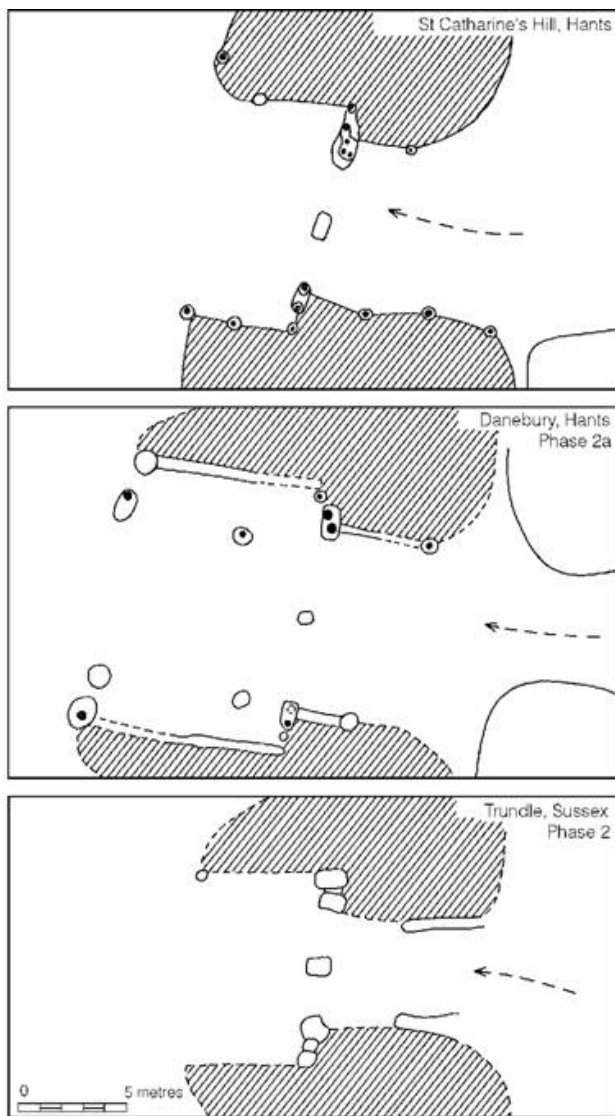


Figure 15.10 Dual-portal entrances (sources: St Catharine's Hill, Hawkes, Myres and Stevens 1930; Danebury, Cunliffe 1972a; Trundle, E.C. Curwen 1931 (author's interpretation)).

The same appears to be true of other entrances. At Danebury, the third-period entrance was provided with a simple dual gate set back at the end of a revetted corridor 13 m long, while at the Trundle the gate of the second phase lay at the end of a corridor 15 m long. Much the same arrangement seems to have been constructed at the inner entrance at Yarnbury and at Blew- burton Hill, Oxon. Little dating

evidence is available but in terms of the individual sequences a fourth-century date is probable.

In the final stage at Torberry (phase IV) the entrance was remodelled on a massive scale (Figure 15.11): the ditch-ends were walled across and filled in, and the corridor was flanked on either side by substantial dry-stone walls 3.0–3.6 m wide extending into the camp for 27 m. At the inner end of the gradually narrowing passage lay the gate, represented by two post-pits. Both phases III and IV were associated with saucepan pots, showing that the creation of the corridor entrances lay within the Middle Iron Age. Much the same development was found at Danebury (Figure 6.7), where in the fifth period a long corridor approach to the gate was created by turning the ends of the rampart outwards to form a passage 45 m long, and building around them, as protection, a pair of claw-like hornworks containing an outer gate (Figure 15.13). From a platform created on the crest of the out-turned rampart it was possible for the defenders to control both gates and the entire compass of the entrance earthworks, as well as the approach to the fort.

Corridor entrances were common throughout the hillfort areas of southern Britain (Figure 15.12). At the neighbouring sites of the Trundle and St Catharine's Hill, long in-turned corridors were now created out of the earlier gate structures, while at Bury Wood Camp, Wilts., the northeast entrance seems to have been first built in this style. Normally the corridor was constructed by turning the ends of the rampart into the camp as at Torberry, but in some cases, for example Buckland Rings, Hants, the Caburn, Sussex, and Llanmelin, Mon., partial or full multivallation contributed to the length of the defended approach, while at other sites like Danebury the corridor effect was created by out-turning the earthworks and protecting them with outer horn-works. A prime example of such an arrangement is the east entrance of Maiden Castle, Dorset (Figures 15.6 and 15.13), in phases II and III. Here any would-be attacker would have been confronted by a long tortuous corridor approach of more than 73 m, winding in and out between earthworks which shielded strategically placed artillery platforms designed, no doubt, to be manned by defenders with slings.

A somewhat simpler method, with the same overall advantages, entailed the construction of a single flanking earthwork attached to one side of the entrance and running parallel to it (Figure 15.13). This type can be most clearly seen at the Steepleton Gate of Hod Hill, Dorset, where a hornwork, unfinished presumably because of Roman attack, was added in front of an already in-turned gate, creating a corridor of 90 m overall length. The same technique was employed at the neighbouring Hambledon Hill and, in a modified form, at

Rawlsbury and Badbury Castle, all in Dorset; the outworks of Yarnbury, Wilts. (Figures 15.13 and 15.14), in their latest form would have created a similar general effect.

Wherever dating evidence is available, simple in-turned corridor entrances of the Torberry type seem to date to the end of the Middle Iron Age, and even the more complex earthworks of Danebury belong to the same period, but the addition of flanking outworks is generally a later development, quite possibly not appearing in the south-west until the first century AD. Flanking works designed to deflect frontal attack are a far more sophisticated reaction to defence than the building of long corridors. It remains to be seen whether it was threat of Roman attack in AD 43 or earlier intertribal fighting which sparked off the development.

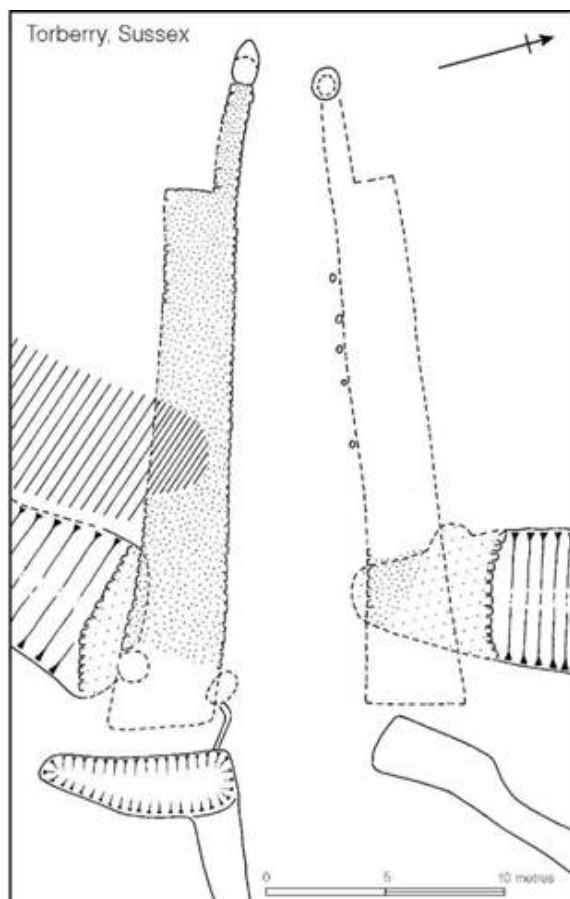


Figure 15.11 The last phase of the main entrance of Torberry, Sussex (source: Cunliffe 1976a).

Turning now to the sequence in the Welsh borderland hillforts, the work at Croft Ambrey, Midsummer Hill and Credenhill Camp in Herefordshire and Ffridd Faldwyn, Montgomery, when collated allows the main development trends to be isolated (Stanford 1971b). The earliest gate is a simple single-portal type found at Ffridd Faldwyn in association with a box rampart and tentatively dated to the eighth and seventh centuries. This was replaced by a series of twin-portal gates spanning the sixth to fourth centuries. Croft Ambrey, where occupation began towards the end of the sixth century, was also provided with a succession of twin-portal gates of broadly similar type.

It was probably during the fifth century or earlier that timber 'guardrooms' came into common use, appearing at Midsummer Hill and probably Credenhill Camp, but soon to be replaced by stone-built 'guard-chambers' of a kind which were also added to the Croft Ambrey gate for which a radiocarbon date of the sixth to fifth century has been obtained. Guard-chambers, or more correctly recesses, are well represented among the hillforts built in the stone areas of north Wales and the Welsh Marches, and extend south into Northamptonshire ([Figure 15.15](#)). Strictly, two different types can be recognized: chambers added immediately behind the ramparts – as at Rainsborough, Northants, Castle Ditch (Eddisbury), Cheshire, Leckhampton Hill, Glos., Moel Hiraddug and Dinorben, Denbigh. – and those built at the ends of long corridor entrances like Titterstone Clee and the Wrekin, Salop, and Pen y Corddyn Mawr, Denbigh. No positive evidence is yet available to suggest whether or not there is a chronological difference between the two types. If we accept the sixth- or fifth-century dating suggested by the single radiocarbon date for the appearance of chambers at Croft Ambrey, which gains support from the two radiocarbon dates now available from Rainsborough, and if the long corridor type of entrance plan was adopted in this area in parallel with its fourth- to third-century appearance in the south, then chambers must have been in use for several centuries. The problem is one which may eventually be solved by further excavation and radiocarbon dating. The possibility that the chambers may, in some regions, have been constructed at the same time is suggested by the very close similarities of those at the south-east gate of Dinorben and the main entrance of Moel Hiraddug (Guilbert 1979b). What function these chambers served, whether for defence or not, it is impossible to say.

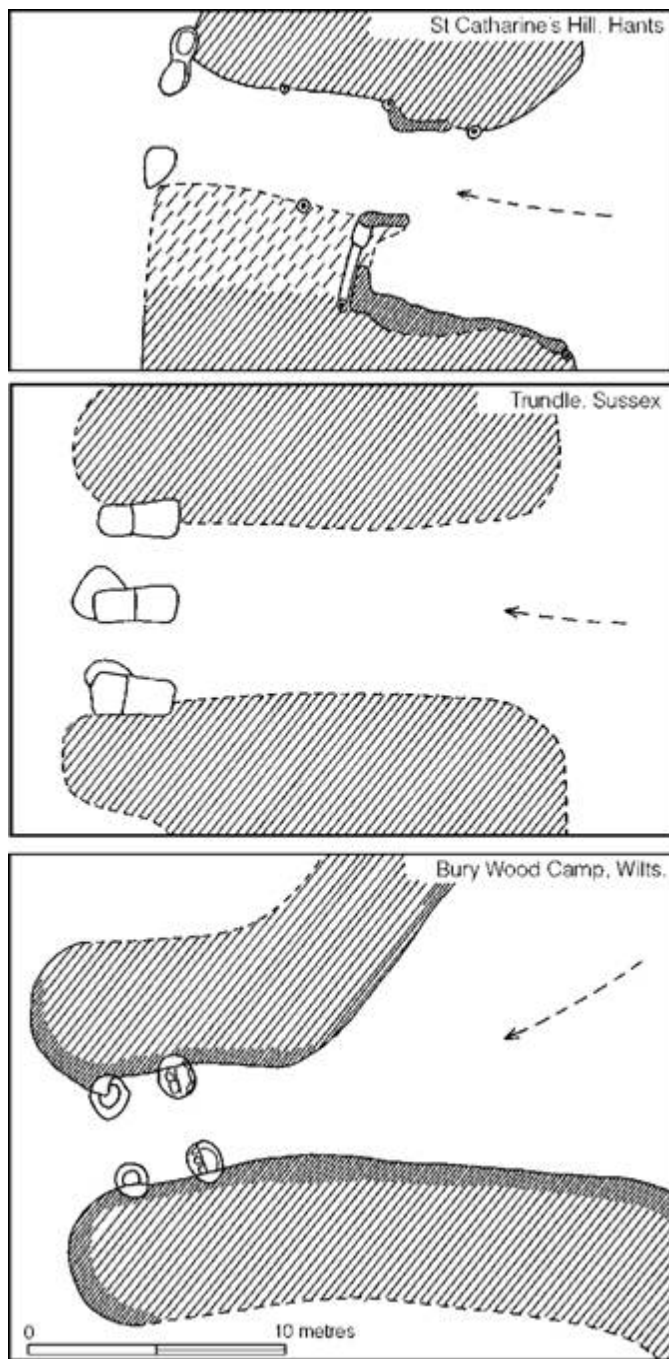


Figure 15.12 Inturned entrances (sources: St Catharine's Hill, Hawkes, Myres and Stevens 1930 (authors' interpretation); Trundle, E.C. Curwen 1931; Bury Wood Camp, King 1967).

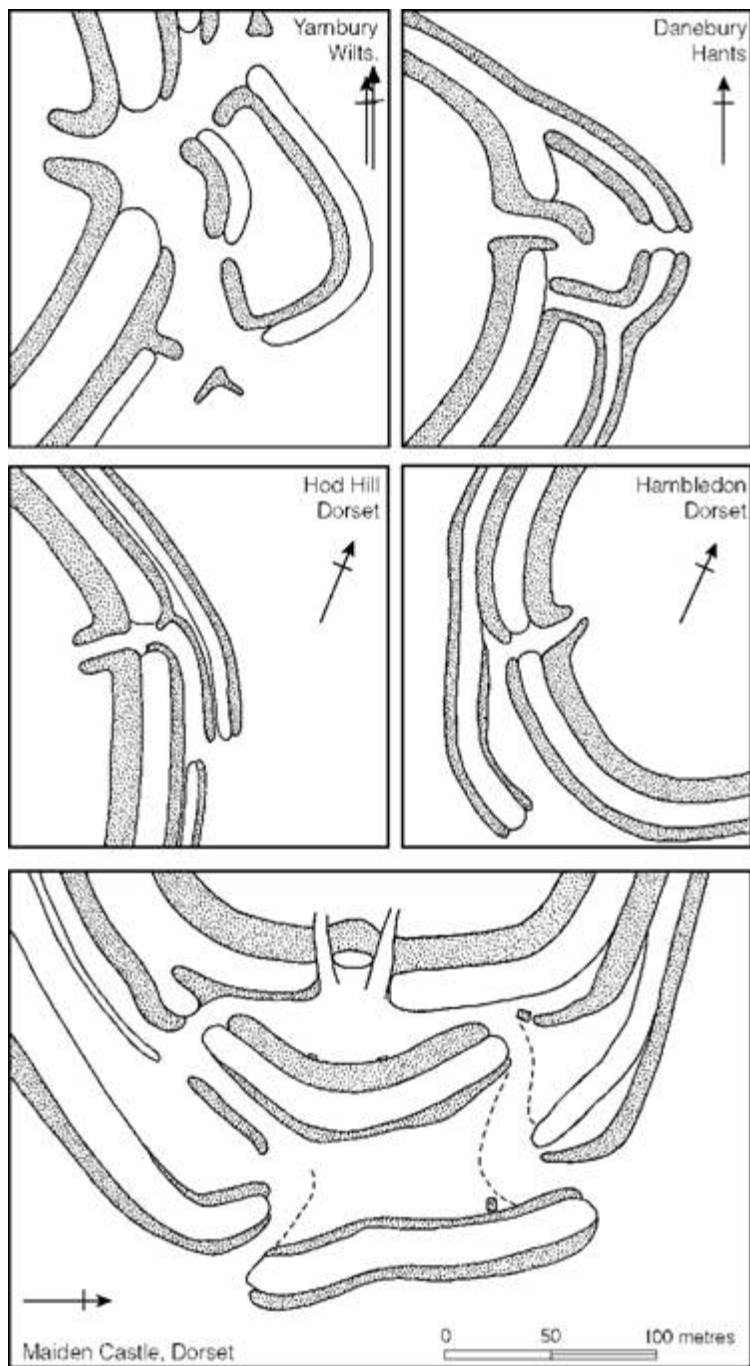


Figure 15.13 Comparative plans of complex outworks protecting hillfort entrances (sources: Yarnbury, M.E. Cunliff 1933; Hod Hill and Hambledon Hill, Richmond 1968; Maiden Castle, Wheeler 1943; Danebury, Cunliff 1972a).

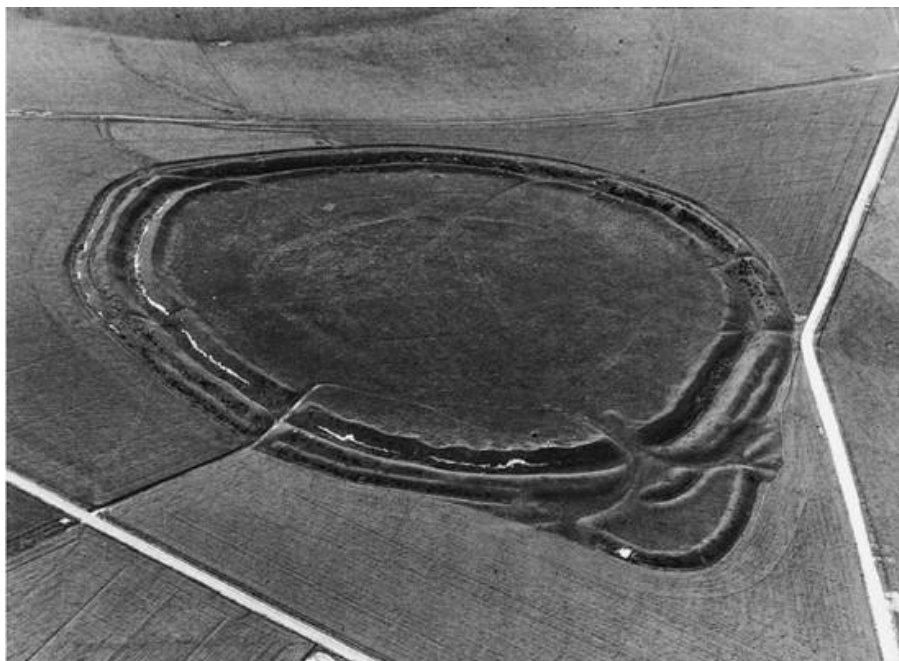


Figure 15.14 Yarnbury, Wilts. (photograph: Dr J.K.S. St Joseph. Crown Copyright reserved).

One characteristic of the corridor entrances of the south, which recurs in the Welsh border sites, is the construction of a bridge over the gate linking one side of the entrance passage with the other, providing obvious defensive advantages (Figure 15.16). In the south bridges are found with long corridor entrances dating to the third and second centuries. In the west similar features appear, also at a late stage in the local sequence – for example at Midsummer Hill and Croft Ambrey – associated at the former site with a radiocarbon date of the first century BC or early first century AD. The consistency in dating is impressive.

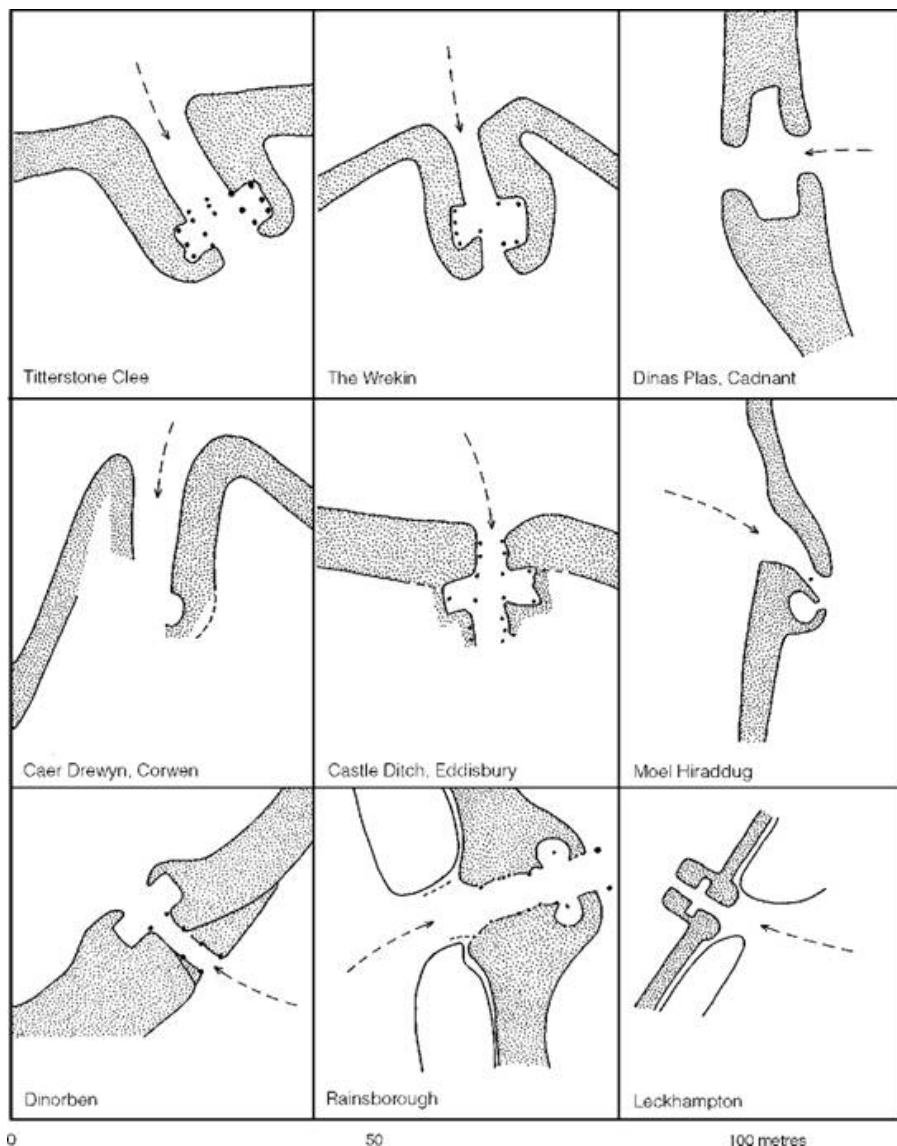


Figure 15.15 Comparative plans of hillfort entrance 'guard-chambers' (source: Gardner and Savory 1964 with amendments and additions).

In summary, it may be said that in the two areas where hillforts have been studied in some detail, a well-defined parallel development can be recognized, although there are some apparent differences in dating in the early stages. Divergence in structural detail begins in the sixth or fifth century with the development of guard-chambers in the

western group, while at the southern sites the gates tend to be set further and further back. Some time during the Middle Iron Age, many of the gates in the south were remodelled as long corridor types in which the gates, combined with bridges, were constructed at the inner ends of corridors sometimes as much as 45 m long. At about this time bridges appear in the western group, possibly together with the limited adoption of the corridor type of entrance plan. It was probably during the first century BC or early first century AD that several forts in the south were provided with complex outworks, perhaps as a defence against threat of Roman attack, but outworks are not a common characteristic of the forts of the western group.

When more radiocarbon dates become available, particularly from forts in the south, greater refinements will be possible, and with further excavation regional variations will no doubt appear. Nevertheless, the general similarity of development over a large area tends to suggest a degree of parallelism, reflected also in basic hillfort structure, which can best be explained by supposing a community of common culture and persistent contact over a considerable period of time.

Regional differences in the planning and siting of hillforts

In the same way that the vernacular architecture of medieval Britain differs from region to region, so too it is possible to recognize peculiarities in the planning and siting of hillforts (Forde-Johnston 1976). The problem cannot be discussed in any detail here but attention must be drawn to the larger and more generalized groupings.

The normal hillfort of southern Britain – the so-called contour type – is in its initial stages usually a univallate structure with a rampart enclosing the crest of a hill (Figures 15.18 and 15.19). With exceptions like Cissbury and the Trundle in Sussex and St Catharine's Hill, Hants, where the original circuits were not subsequently enlarged, many were increased in size. At some, like Yarnbury, Wilts., the early fort was completely replaced by an entirely new rampart roughly concentric with the first (Figures 15.14 and 15.20), while others were enlarged with a single addition as in the case of Maiden Castle, Dorset, and Torberry, Sussex (Figure 15.20), or more than one addition like Hambledon Hill, Dorset (Figure 15.21). Multivallation, where it occurs, can usually be shown to be late.

Contour forts are to a large extent the natural result of fortifying a gentle downland landscape, but even within the area of the chalk

downs there are steeper ridges and promontories demanding different treatment. Torberry is a good example of this: here, in its first period (Figure 15.20), a cross-defence was constructed across the ridge, cutting off and protecting the end of a promontory; only later was the fort converted into a conventional contour work.

In the Weald, where much of the countryside is more sharply dissected by streams, promontories were usually chosen for the siting of forts. In the case of High Rocks and Hammer Wood (Iping) in Sussex (Figure 15.22), multiple defences were constructed across the neck of the ridge with much slighter earthworks around the other slopes where the land falls steeply away. The Wealden forts were simply making the optimum use of the defensive possibilities of the landscape.

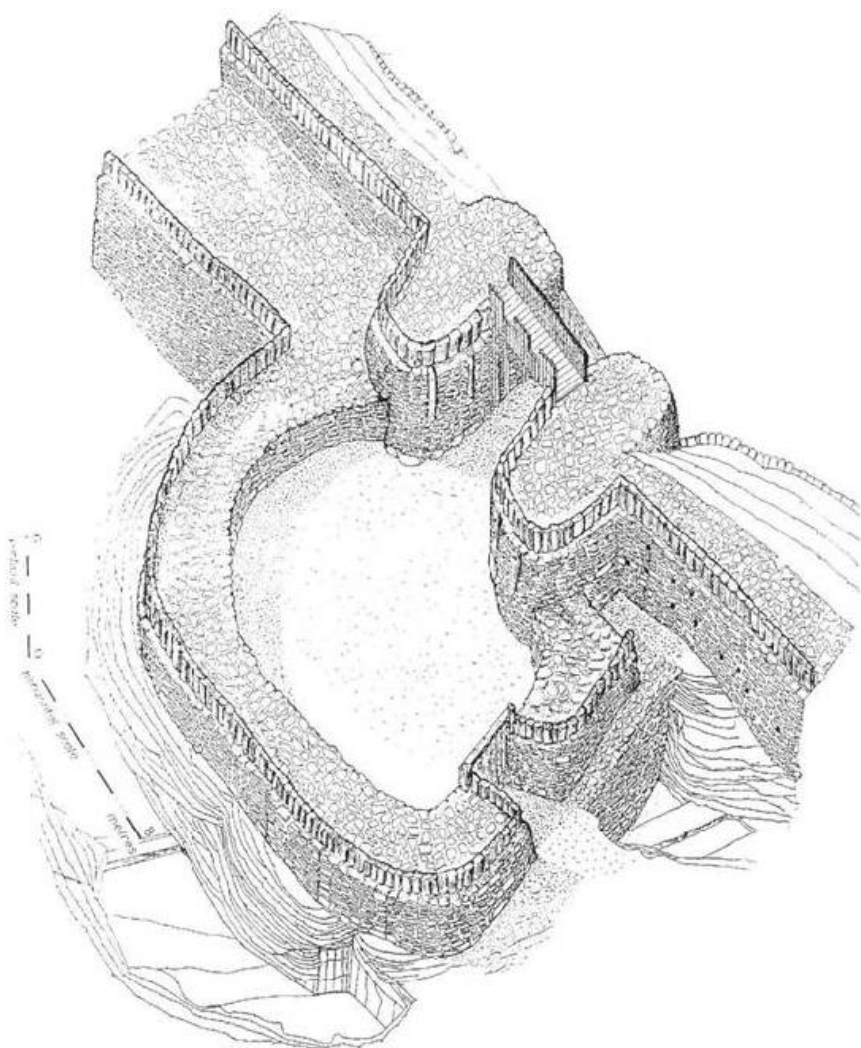


Figure 15.16 Reconstruction of the gate of Crickley Hill hillfort, Glos. in its final stage, period 3b (reproduced from Dixon 1994, ill. 186).

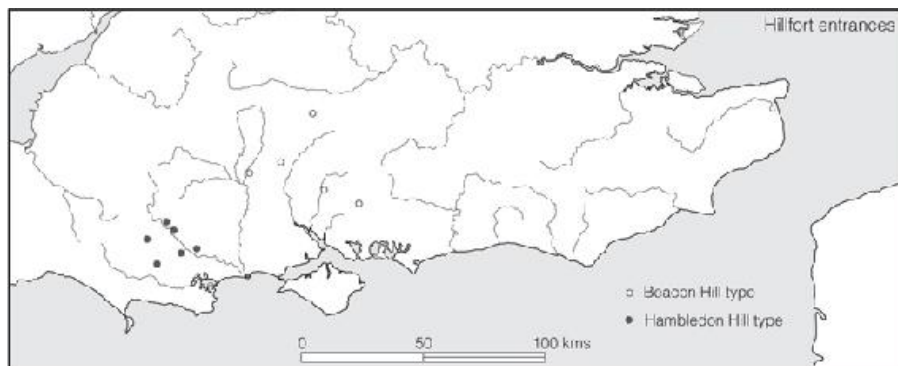


Figure 15.17 Distribution of two distinctive hillfort entrance types (source: author).

The same general principles can surely be applied to the cliff castles of Cornwall and southwest Wales (Figures 13.12 and 13.17). Headlands projecting into the sea needed only short lengths of artificial defences cut across the neck to render them virtually impregnable. Admittedly, the structural similarities of the Cornish cliff castles as well as certain aspects of the material culture show strong links with the Armorican peninsula – an area of similar geomorphological structure. But the absence of cliff castles in Cornwall would have been more culturally significant than their presence, for the structure of the countryside demands this type of fortification.

While geomorphology is a significant factor in the siting and form of hillforts, geological considerations, particularly the availability of good building stone, can sometimes have a direct effect on actual structure and perhaps on form. In the Cotswolds it is possible to trace a group of relatively small univallate forts of almost circular plan – including Lyneham, Ilbury, Idbury Camp and Chastleton in Oxfordshire and Windrush Camp, Glos. – which contrast with the vast enclosures of more than 22 ha, usually sited on ridges, like Norbury Camp (Northleach) and Nottingham Hill, Glos. (Rivet 1961, 33). Exactly what factors were involved in the evolution of these two classes is not clear but economic and social considerations may well have been important, while the circular form of the smaller category may have been encouraged by the availability of building stone.

Economic factors were of considerable significance in influencing fort type. It has already been emphasized (chapter 13) that the

multiple-enclosure forts of the south-west peninsula and southwest Wales were a response to the predominantly pastoral economy of these regions, but it would be more accurate to regard them as fortified homesteads. The adding of annexes to the large forts, however (a response to comparable economic pressures), gives several of the forts in the Welsh borderland an overall similarity to them, but a similarity brought about by the demands of the farming economy rather than by culture, chronology or geology.

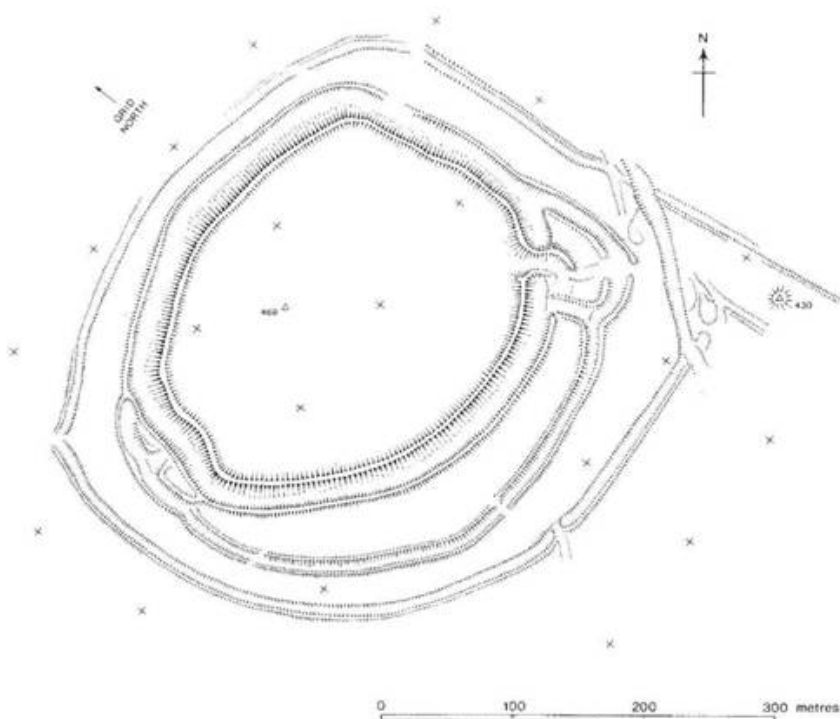


Figure 15.18 Danebury, Hants (source: Cunliffe 1972a with amendments).

To some extent, isolation can give rise to regional variations (Figure 15.17). The hillforts of Caernarvonshire (Hogg 1962) demonstrate this particularly well. Their large size, hill-top siting, simple dry-stone walled structure and dense internal occupation serve to unite the group and to distinguish them from the structures in the north-east of the Principality, which relate more closely to those in the Welsh borderland. An even more impressive demonstration of regionalization is provided by a consideration of forts in Scotland (Feachem 1966), where by ground survey alone several distinctive types of plan, clustering significantly together, have been recognized.

This brief survey may have erred too much on the side of geographical determinism, but in the past too much emphasis has been placed on cultural/historical explanations when discussing hillfort form. Regional isolation, geology, geomorphology, economy and social structure are of far greater significance in determining siting and planning. In those areas between which cultural contacts were strong, a degree of uniformity and parallel development prevailed. Where, however, areas of countryside were isolated by natural features, a greater regionalization is apparent.

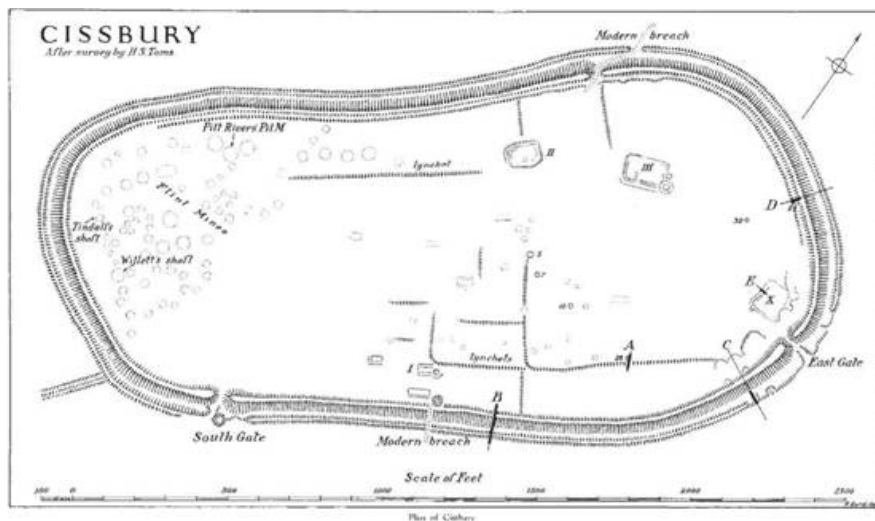


Figure 15.19 Cissbury, Sussex (source: reproduced from Curwen and Williamson 1931).

The development of hillforts

Wessex and adjacent areas

Leaving aside considerations of chronology, the distribution of hillforts in Britain is far from even. As [Figure 15.1](#) so clearly shows, there is a marked concentration in a zone beginning in Wessex and the South Downs and continuing through the Cotswolds and the Welsh borderland to the coast of north Wales. It is within this *central southern* zone that the majority of the hillfort excavations have been carried out and all the large-scale excavations of recent years have been focused. Thus the database for the region, though leaving much to be desired, is far better than for any other part of Britain or parts of the adjacent Continent. Sufficient is now known to allow a general development model to be put forward (Cunliffe 1984c). For ease of

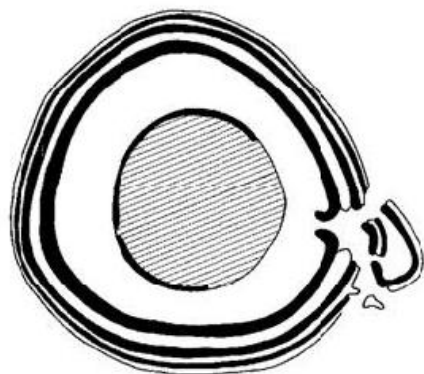
discussion the simple chronological framework outlined in [chapter 5](#) will be adopted: *earliest* refers to the period from c. 800 to 600, *early* to 600–c. 400/300 and *middle* to the period from 400/300 to 100 BC.

The earliest hillforts ([Figures 15.23 and 15.24](#))

Hillforts of the earliest period fall into two distinct categories: vast straggling structures with slight defences usually over 10 ha in extent; and small strongly defended enclosures usually multivallate and occupying ridge-ends.

The larger group are better referred to as *hill-top enclosures* since their enclosing earthworks are hardly of defensive quality. Size varies from the small enclosure of Winklebury I (6.8 ha) to gigantic sites like Ogbury, Wilts. (25 ha), Norbury, Glos. (32 ha), Bathampton Down, Avon (32.5 ha), and Walbury, Berks. (35.2 ha); Bindon Hill, Dorset, is considerably larger if all the land to the present sea coast is included. Altogether there are ten to fifteen sites of this kind centring on Wessex but stretching from Sussex to Gloucestershire (Wainwright 1967b). Others can be identified further afield at Nadbury Camp and Borough Hill, both in Northamptonshire, and at Ivinghoe Beacon, Herts. The interiors of four have been sampled on a reasonable scale: Harting Beacon, Sussex, Barksbury, Hants, Winklebury I, Hants, and Norbury, Glos. All share similar characteristics: the defences were comparatively slight, there was a dearth of occupation debris and internal structures were sparse. In Harting Beacon and Norbury only a few small four-post structures were discovered, but at the more extensive excavations of Barksbury and Winklebury a few contemporary circular structures, possibly houses or shelters, were found. The enclosure at Hog Cliff Hill, Dorset, belongs to this same general category. Here, following a Late Bronze Age settlement, a slight ditched enclosure of some 5.6 ha was constructed within which were a series of circular buildings. The enclosure was subsequently enlarged to 10.5 ha and the buildings were replaced by penannular mounds of flints built apparently as shelters.

Yarnbury



Torberry



Maiden Castle

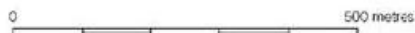
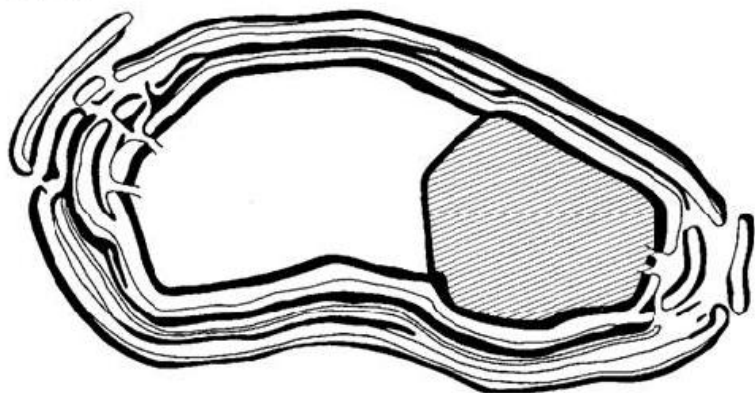


Figure 15.20 Hillforts which have been extended. The shaded areas represent the initial enclosures (source: Cunliffe 1984c).



Figure 15.21 *Hambledon Hill, Dorset. Successive extensions can be discerned (photograph: Dr J.K.S. St Joseph. Crown Copyright reserved).*

While the function of these early hill-top enclosures is obscure, the lack of evidence for intensive occupation is consistent and points to the possibility that they may have been used only sporadically, but the replacement of circular structures at Winklebury I is sufficient to show that occupation was more than a single brief event. The four-post structures, which characterize the internal occupation, are conventionally called ‘granaries’. This however is an observer-imposed terminology and such simple post settings could equally well have served as racks or platforms for any kind of storage. While no firm conclusion can yet be offered as to the function of these enclosures, one possibility is that they represented communally built structures related to a seasonal activity within the farming year. If the small four-post structures are interpreted as hay racks or fodder stores of some kind, then the enclosures could well have served for autumn corralling. Flocks and herds would need to be rounded up for sorting, castrating and culling and this is most likely to have been a communal activity. Evidence for this comes from Balksbury, where a careful examination of the soil accumulation behind the rampart demonstrated intensive use of the site by cattle. It is possible that over-wintering of stock may also have been focused on enclosures of

this kind, in which case some accommodation for the guardians of the livestock would have been necessary. These are, of course, only hypotheses, but some such use would fit well with our general concepts of socio-economic development which will be considered in more detail below ([chapter 16](#)).

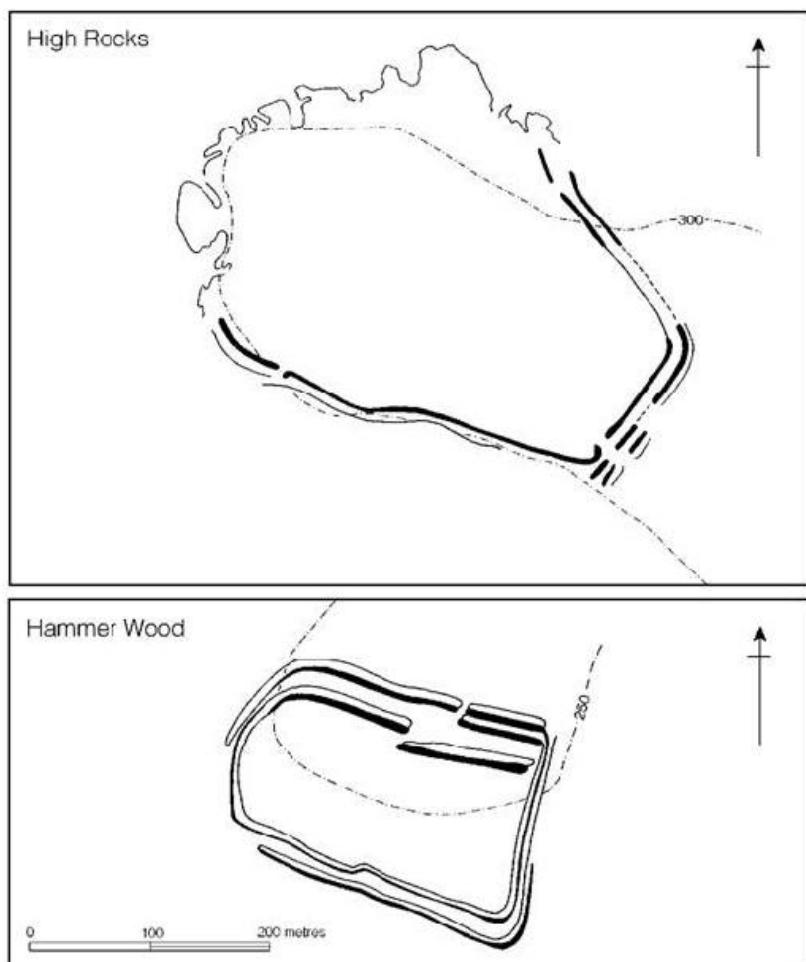


Figure 15.22 *Wealden promontory forts (sources: High Rocks, Money 1968; Hammer Wood, Boyden 1957).*

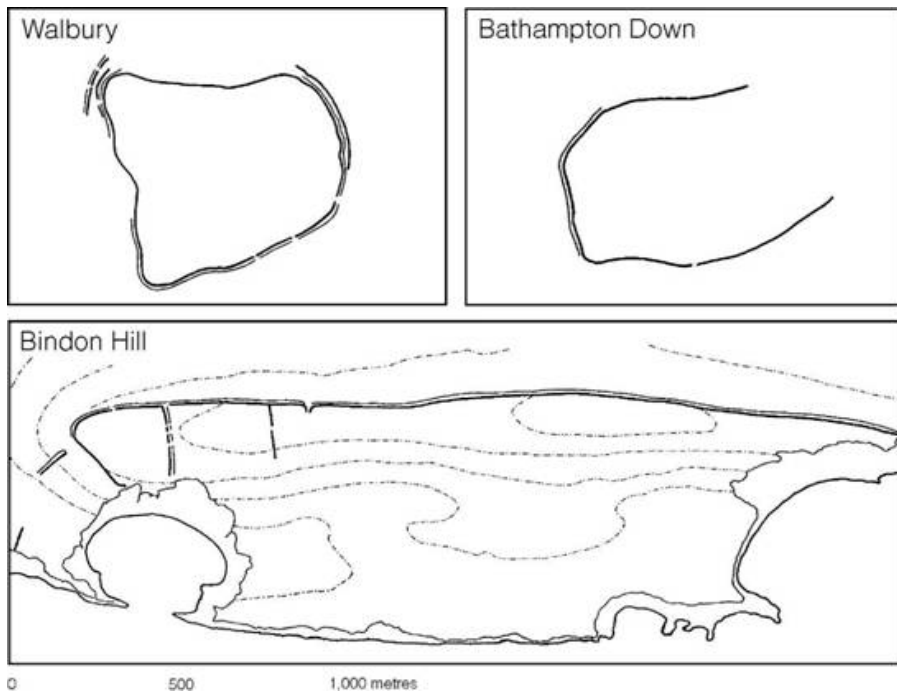


Figure 15.23 Early hill-top enclosures (source: author).

The second category of ‘hillfort’ in the earliest phase of the Iron Age can be characterized as small enclosures of 1–3 ha in extent, strongly defended often with multiple earthworks, the interior producing rich occupation deposits (Figure 15.24). Sites of this kind are not particularly well known, but at Budbury, Avon, excavation has defined a 3 ha enclosure with a complex of ramparts and ditches occupying the end of a steep promontory. Limited excavation within the interior produced a considerable range of debris pointing to intensive occupation. Lidbury Camp, Wilts., is also of this period. Here a small strongly defended rectangular enclosure produced eleven storage pits in a comparatively limited area excavation. Oliver’s Camp, Wilts., and Highdown, Sussex, are among others that have been examined on a sufficient scale to show that they belong to the same general category. It is tempting to see these defended settlements as the permanent bases of a sector of society, perhaps an aristocracy if the defences are thought to reflect status. Once more, however, the excavated data are too sparse to allow firm conclusions to be drawn.

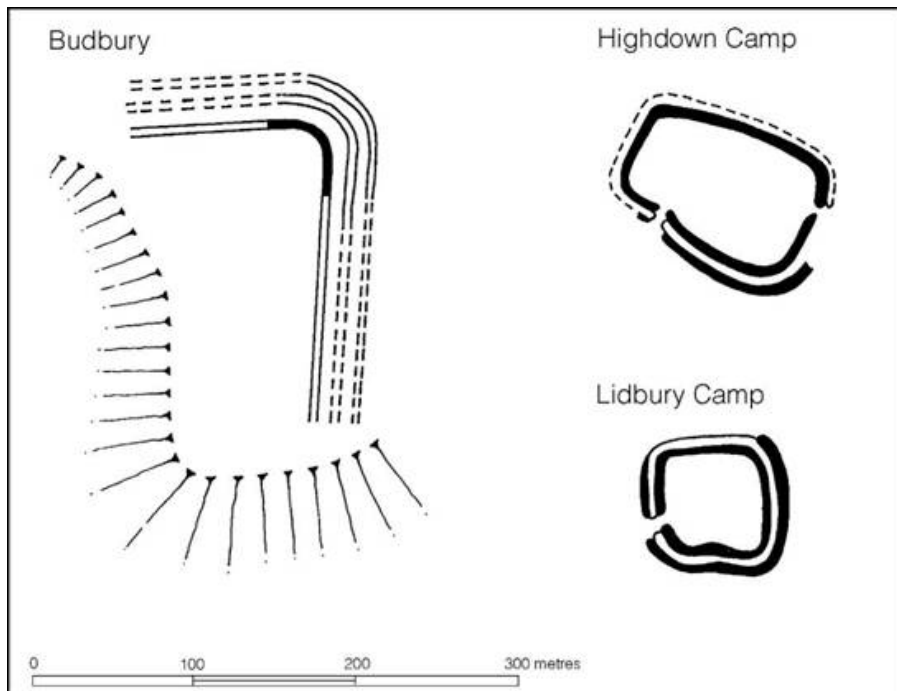


Figure 15.24 *Defended ridge-end forts (source: Cunliffe 1984c).*

Hill-top enclosures and defended settlements are two features of the contemporary settlement pattern of Wessex. Others include the large and apparently open settlements typified by All Cannings Cross and Potterne, Wilts., while the ditch-enclosed farmstead of Old Down Farm, Hants, represents another type. Our so-called earliest ‘hillforts’ must then be seen as only one element in a varied pattern representing a complex social hierarchy.

Early hillforts(**Figures 15.25 and 15.26**)

The Early Iron Age in central southern Britain, which covers the period roughly of the sixth and fifth centuries, was a time of developing cultural uniformity. Though distinctive regional pottery styles serve to distinguish what might be regarded as emerging ethnic entities, throughout the broadest region a new type of *early hillfort* appeared. These were usually contour works, averaging 5 ha in extent. They were defended by a single ditch, backed by a rampart usually faced inside and out with stonework or timber or a combination of the two. There were normally two entrances on opposite sides of the

enclosure (Figure 15.25). From what is known of their distribution in Wessex, forts of this kind would seem to have been densely and quite evenly scattered across the landscape, and many of the typologically later hillforts may, on excavation, prove to have originated in this period (Cunliffe 1984c, 19–23). Few, if any, developed from fortified enclosures of the earliest period but at Danebury there is some evidence to suggest that the early hillfort was constructed within a larger and slighter enclosure which contained four-post structures. This may prove to be a more widespread phenomenon than was originally appreciated but such relationships are impossible to discern from surface characteristics alone.

The area of downland between the rivers Test and Bourne has been thoroughly investigated and can provide a fair indication of the density of early hillforts in the landscape (Figure 15.27). In all, five hillforts are known. Of these, one, Balksbury, originated as an early hill-top enclosure but was not fortified or occupied in the early period. The other four, Bury Hill, Figsbury, Danebury and Quarley, with Woolbury to the east of the Test, all provide some evidence to suggest that they were built and used within the early period. These sites were closely located between 8 and 11 km apart but there is no reason to suppose that this density was unusual for Wessex in the early period.

Four *early hillforts* have been the subject of programmes of area excavation, but on varying scales: South Cadbury, Somerset, Chalbury and Maiden Castle, Dorset, and Danebury, Hampshire (Figure 15.26). Only at Chalbury was the site found to be uncluttered with later occupation. Here surface evidence of thirty or so large circular depressions was recognizable and the three of these that were excavated proved to be houses. The many smaller depressions probably represented pits, only one of which was uncovered. The surface features suggest that some zoning may have existed, but without intensive excavation it is impossible to say. A rather clearer picture emerges from the large-scale area excavation at Danebury where, in spite of much later occupation, the early plan can be clearly discerned. Much of the central area, around two buildings which may have served as shrines, was used solely for the siting of pits, probably for grain storage, while in the peripheral zone behind the ramparts, wider on the south than the north, circular houses, storage pits and post-structures concentrated: it was here that occupation debris was at its densest. The more limited evidence from Maiden Castle and South Cadbury suggests that all four sites were broadly comparable in this early period.

Early hillforts differ noticeably from early hill-top enclosures in that they were smaller and better defended, and internal occupation was dense and probably continuous, the debris showing that a wide range

of normal domestic activities were undertaken. The enclosing earthworks were clearly regarded as defensive. Their siting was carefully chosen to make the most of the natural contours and the gates were strongly fortified. At Danebury and Maiden Castle forward projecting hornworks were added during the early period. There is also ample evidence at both sites and elsewhere, e.g. Figsbury, South Cadbury, Chalbury, Quarley, Woolbury and St Catharine's Hill, that the defensive circuits were refurbished from time to time. Copious collections of slingstones from Danebury and Maiden Castle provide added evidence of defence, while traces of burning at Danebury and St Catharine's Hill may have resulted from an attack. For all these reasons we may fairly regard these sites as fortifications designed to protect the community from raids. But within this group of early forts there is variation. In the Danebury region, for example, there is evidence to suggest that Quarley, Woolbury and Figsbury were built later than Danebury and Bury Hill by perhaps a century or so, and only Danebury shows any sign of intensive occupation (Cunliffe 2000, 163–6). The social implications which follow from this are best left for later discussion in [chapter 21](#).

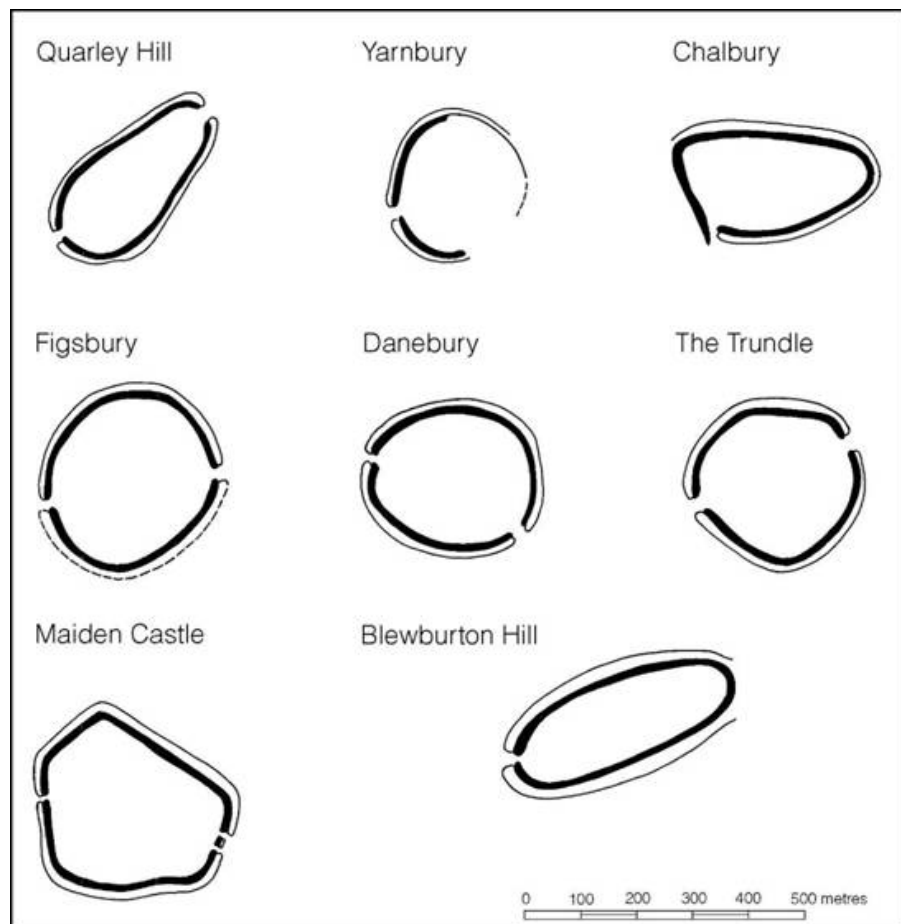
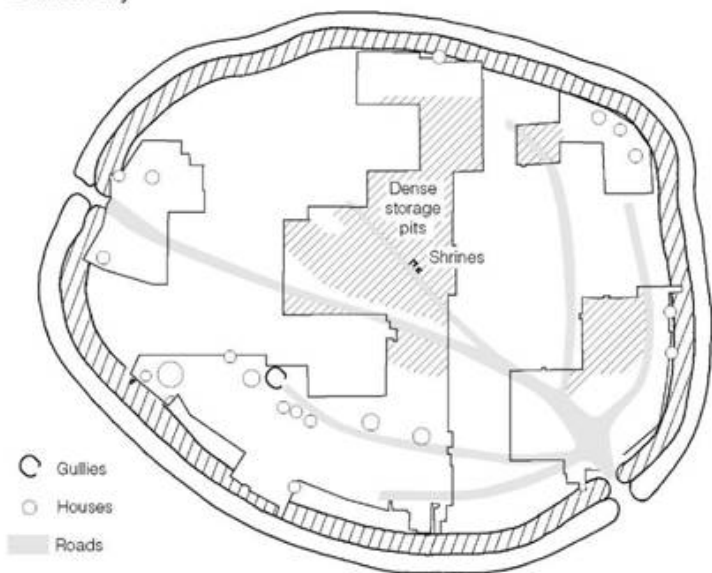


Figure 15.25 *Comparative plans of early hillforts (source: Cunliffe 1984c).*

Danebury



Chalbury

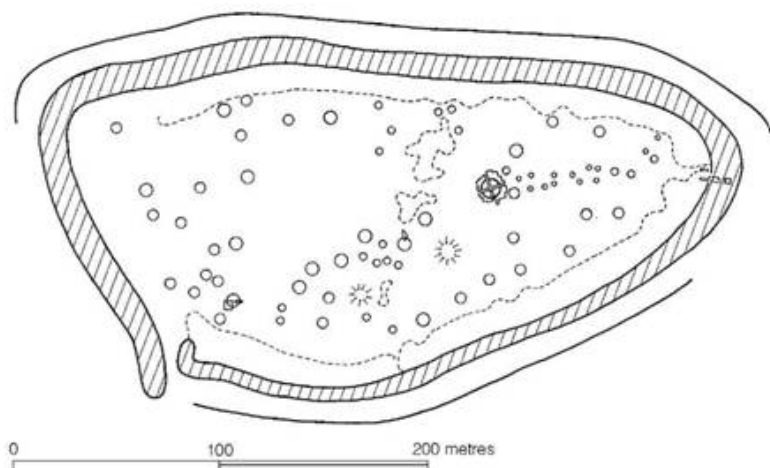


Figure 15.26 The interiors of early hillforts (source: Cunliffe 1984c with modifications).

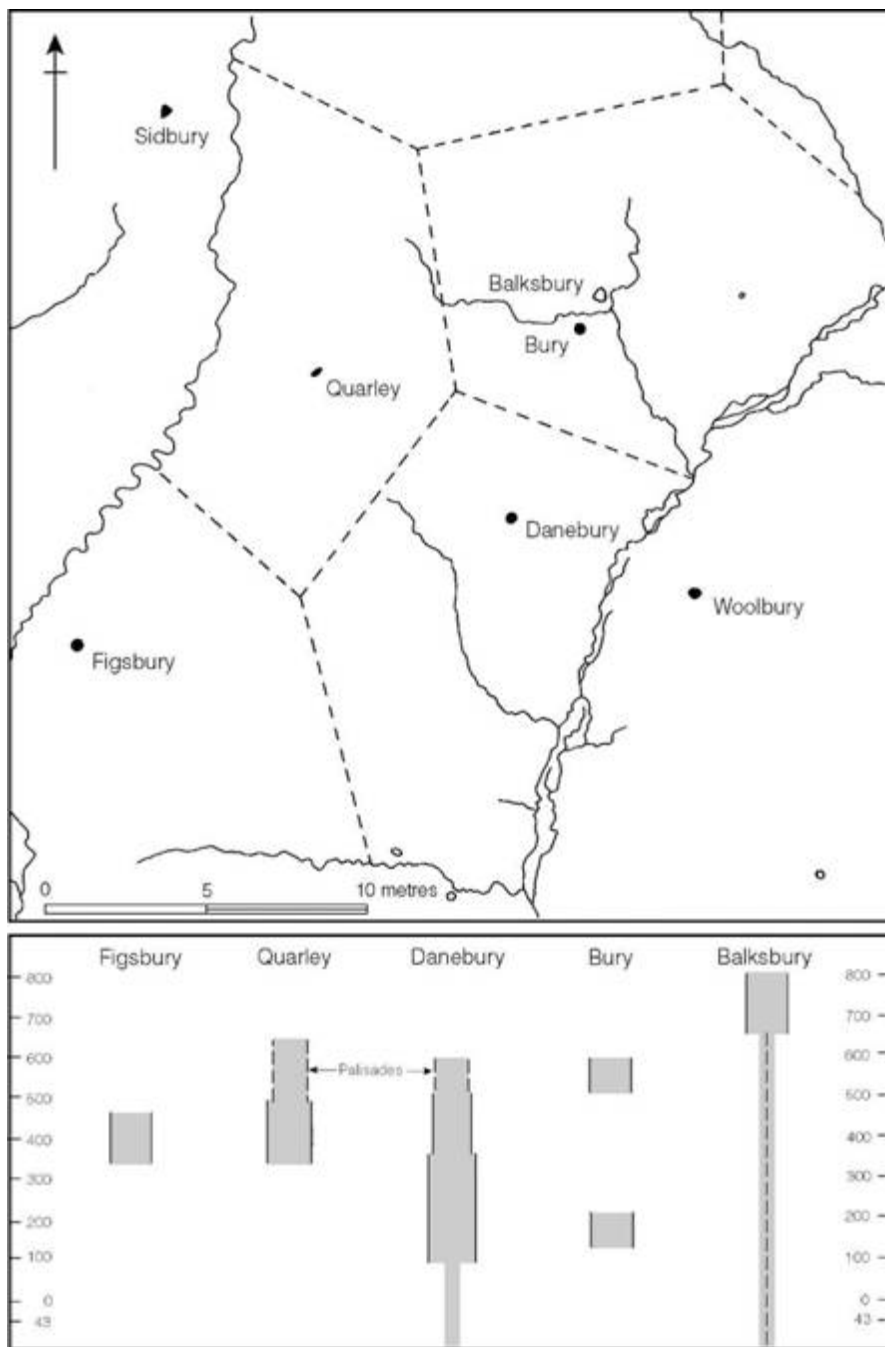


Figure 15.27 The hillforts of the Danebury region, showing their theoretical territories constructed on the basis of Thiessen polygons. The lower diagram indicates duration of occupation of the forts (source: Cunliffe 1976b with later modifications).

Middle Iron Age hillforts

In the period 400–300 BC a widespread change can be detected in Wessex: a number of the early hillforts were abandoned while those that remained in use were refortified, frequently on a massive scale: these we refer to as *developed hillforts*. Danebury provides a good example of what this entailed. Here the early rampart was greatly increased in volume with material largely derived from a wide quarry trench dug just behind the rampart tail. The ditch was also recut as a deep V, the inner side of which was continuous with the front slope of the rampart. One of the entrances was now blocked, while the remaining one underwent a series of changes culminating in a long corridor type protected by a complex of outworks.

A number of early forts, including South Cadbury and Blewburton, were modified in this way but elsewhere enclosed areas were increased. At Maiden Castle and Torberry the new defences, while following part of the earlier circuit, incorporated new areas, while at Yarnbury the old defences were entirely abandoned, the new enclosure taking a much wider circuit ([Figure 15.20](#)). Clearly within the general pattern of Middle Iron Age re-defence a range of strategies were adopted. Moreover, one has only to compare the three plans illustrated on [Figure 15.20](#) to appreciate the considerable variation in size, and presumably therefore status, among the developed hillforts.

Although a majority of the developed hillforts emerged as modifications of functioning early forts there are a few possible examples of early hill-top enclosures being brought back into use after a century or two of abandonment. Winklebury (if accepted as an early hill-top enclosure) may be one such, and it is possible that Hod Hill, Dorset, is another though the available evidence is ambiguous. Sometimes virgin sites seem to have been chosen for developed hillforts. This would appear to be true of a number of the hillforts of Kent and Surrey where radiocarbon evidence suggests that occupation began in the fourth or third centuries (Cunliffe 1982b).

As a broad generalization it can be said that over most of central southern Britain there were many fewer developed hillforts than there were early hillforts. This is particularly clearly demonstrated in the Test–Bourne region ([Figure 15.27](#)), where of the four early forts occupying the territory in the early period only one, Danebury, continued as a developed hillfort in the Middle Iron Age. In other words Danebury became the single dominant focus in a landscape. A number of settlement sites in the countryside around were also abandoned at this time.

Reflections of a similar process can be discerned on the Sussex Downs, an elongated chalk ridge divided into distinct blocks by rivers. The total number of hillforts is quite large (Figure 15.28), but when the few forts producing evidence of Middle Iron Age occupation are plotted they can be seen to be spaced evenly, with each fort occupying a discrete block of downland, giving the impression of distinct territoriality (Bedwin 1978b; Hamilton and Manley 1997 and 2001).

Much the same pattern emerges on the downs of northern Hampshire and Berkshire (Figure 15.29). The twelve sites displaying characteristics of Middle Iron Age developed hillforts are evenly spaced within the landscape and all occupy similar positions in relation to the two principal resource potentials: the unwatered downland and land within easy reach of permanent water supply. These fortified locations have emerged from a complex of earlier fortifications to be the focal points of discrete territories, their survival, no doubt, aided by their favourable locations.

The date of the appearance of developed hillforts would seem to lie in the fourth or third century BC based partly upon a series of radiocarbon dates and partly upon an assessment of the associated ceramic assemblages. Even so, dating cannot be precise and while it is possible that the forts sprang into existence in their developed form at more or less the same time in the early fourth century BC, the possibility must be allowed that they emerged over a far more extended period.

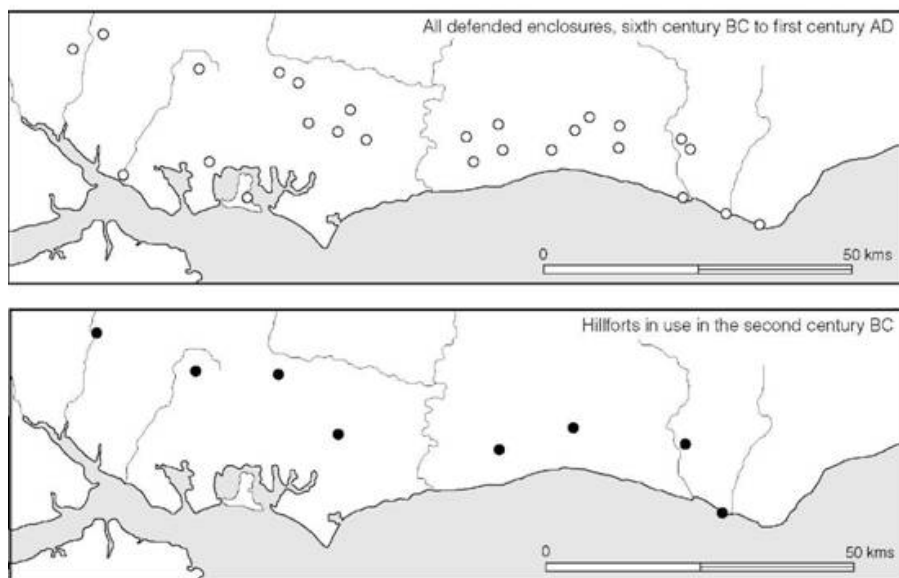


Figure 15.28 Hillforts on the South Downs (source: author).

Consideration of the function of developed hillforts must begin with Danebury, where half of the interior has been excavated and the general arrangement of features is now clear (Figures 15.30–15.32). A dendritic pattern of roads and paths branched out from the entrance, providing easy access to every part of the interior. The principal settlement area lay around the periphery of the fort and consisted of a series of closely spaced circular houses with associated storage buildings, storage pits and working areas. In some parts, especially around the north side, there is some evidence for larger houses set a little further into the fort, away from the ramparts. The interior was divided into two by a main road. The southern half was given over almost entirely to rows of massively built storage buildings aligned along paths and replaced frequently on the same spot. To the north of the main road these buildings were much rarer, but storage pits, which occurred widely within the fort, were much in evidence. It was here, too, that a group of shrines was located (pp. 563–4).

Standing back from the detail of the excavation two things emerge: the ordered regularity of the plan and the intensity of the occupation, an intensity manifesting itself in the repeated replacement of buildings and the sheer bulk of the occupation debris.

Danebury is by no means unusual. Maiden Castle and South Cadbury have produced a comparable range of evidence, though the areas excavated were more limited (Figure 15.34), and even the small-scale trial holes dug at Yarnbury yielded a surprising density of pits. Winklebury II, on the other hand, produced a rather different pattern (Figure 15.33). Pits and post-holes and a range of domestic debris were found, but the density of use was evidently much lighter. The differences are quantitative rather than qualitative and are best explained by suggesting that Winklebury was used for only a short time whereas Danebury remained in occupation throughout the Middle Iron Age. The differences, however, serve as a reminder that site history probably varies considerably from fort to fort and not all developed hillforts need have commanded territories throughout the entire duration of the Middle Iron Age.

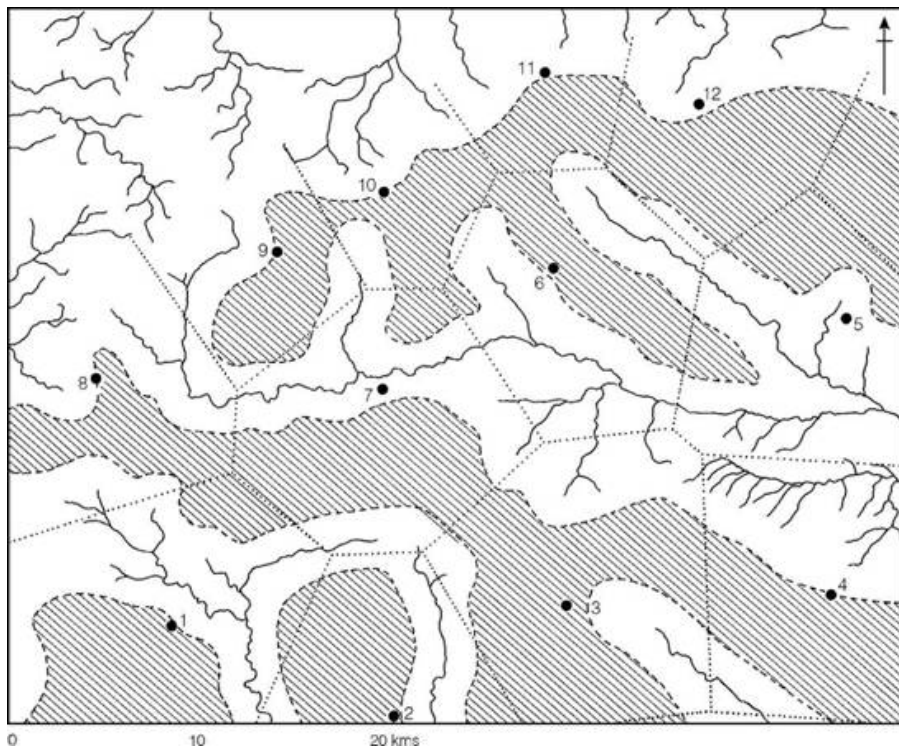


Figure 15.29 Hillforts on the north Wessex Downs c. 200 BC. The shaded area indicates land more than 1 mile from the nearest permanent water supply. 1 Broadway Banks; 2 Sidbury; 3 Fosbury; 4 Beacon Hill; 5 Bussocks; 6 Membury; 7 Forest Hill; 8 Oldbury; 9 Barbury; 10 Liddington Castle; 11 Uffington Castle; 12 Segsbury (source: Cunliffe 1976a with amendments).

How the developed forts functioned within the socio-economic system is a matter of speculation, but a strong case can be made for suggesting that some of them may have provided central-place functions. They generally occupied dominant positions in large territories and commanded a range of resources. There is ample evidence of massive storage facilities (well in excess of contemporary farmsteads when assessed area by area) to enable local products like corn and wool to be stockpiled. Rarer raw materials, derived from outside the immediate territories, such as iron, bronze, shale and salt, were also being brought in for manufacture into items of enhanced value. Taken together the evidence is strongly suggestive of a complex of redistribution functions being articulated within the protection of the ramparts. This possibility gains considerable support from the discovery, at Danebury, of a number of regularly cut stone weights.

Clearly, if redistribution was a function of developed hillforts some mode of accurate measurement would have been required (Cunliffe 1984a, 556–9). How these activities fitted into the broader socio-economic system is a question to which we must return in [chapter 21](#).



Figure 15.30 *The interior of Danebury. The features represent occupation over the period c. 550–100 BC (source: author).*

One further function which developed hillforts may have performed was that of providing a religious focus of the community. Buildings which might be regarded as temples have now been found, occupying prominent positions, in three forts. At Maiden Castle the main street entering the east gate ran through the fort directly to a circular stone-walled structure 9 m in diameter ([Figure 15.34](#)). The fact that this building was replaced in the Roman period by a similar circular building that lay immediately adjacent to a Romano-Celtic temple hints at the possibility that the pre-Roman building served a religious function: its imposing approach certainly singles it out as a structure of some significance. This arrangement is also reflected at South Cadbury, where a processional way led to what was probably a shrine

or a temple. Work at Danebury has also brought to light a group of rectangular buildings, all facing the fort entrance and aligned close to the main road ([Figure 20.14](#)). These three sites provide a reminder that sanctuaries may be expected to be an integral part of hillfort occupation. The presence of later Romano-Celtic temples within a number of forts surely implies a continuity of religious practice from the pre-invasion period.

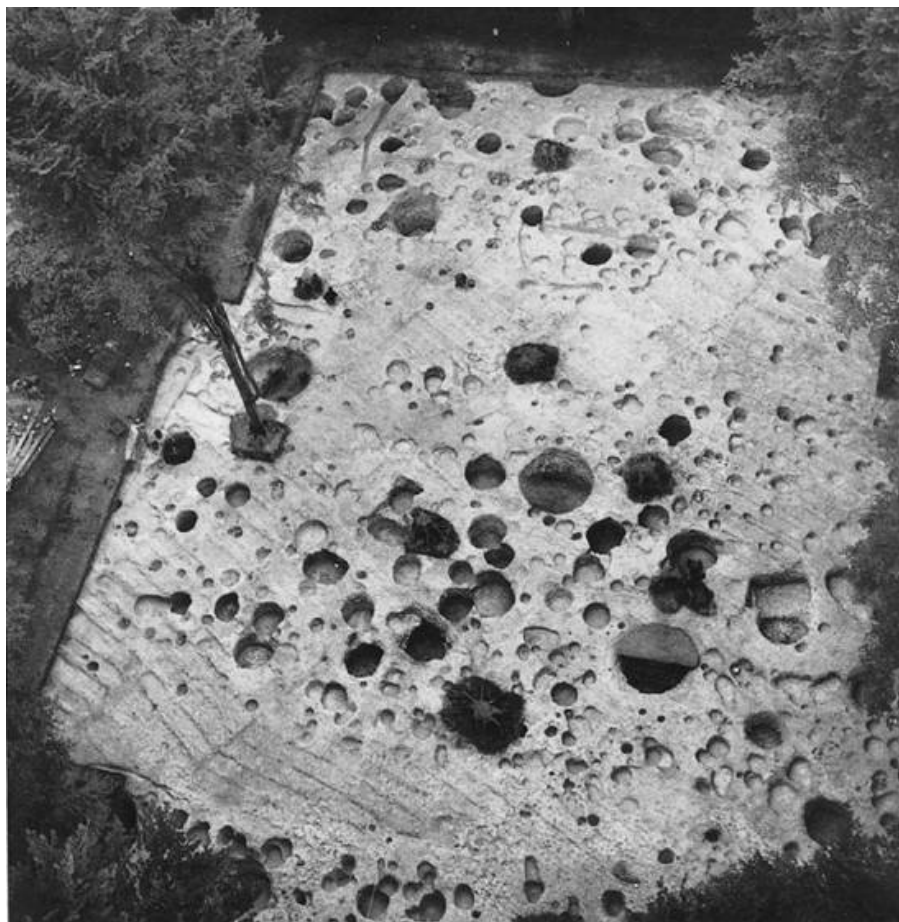


Figure 15.31 *Excavation inside the hillfort of Danebury, Hants, showing streets, the post-holes of timber buildings and storage pits (photograph: David Leigh. Danebury Trust).*

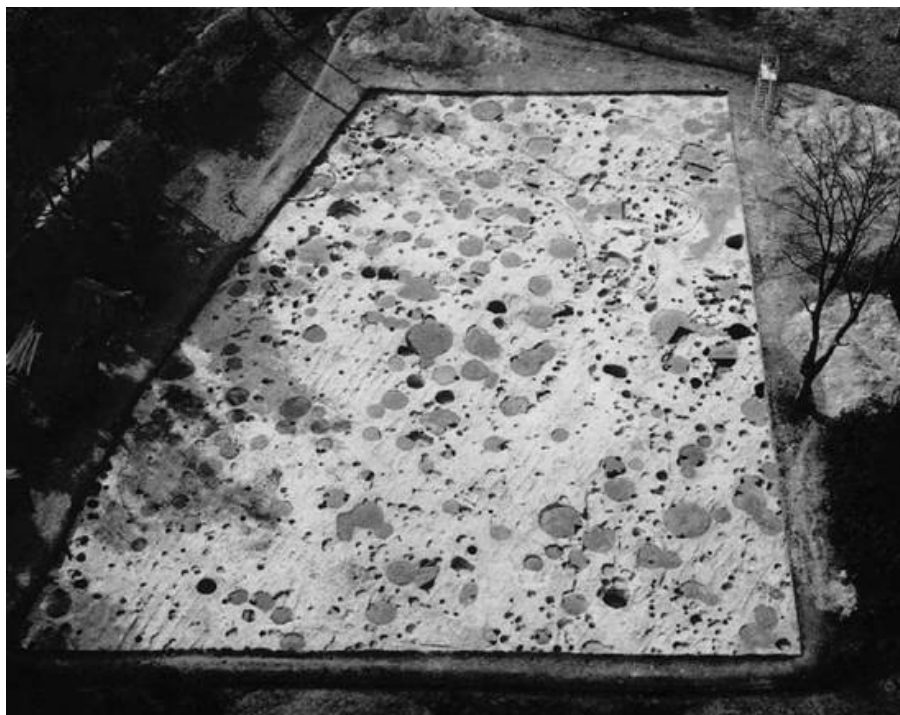


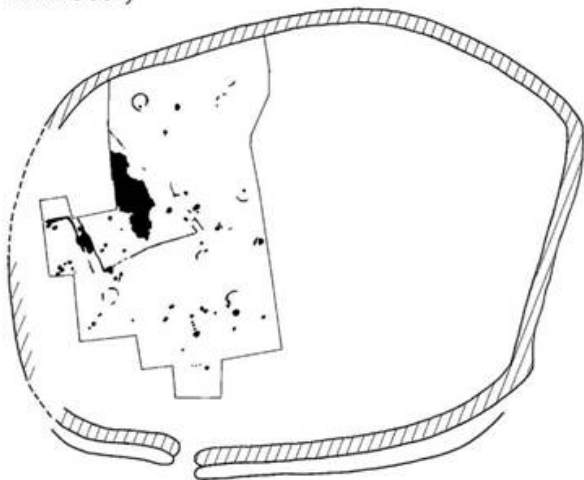
Figure 15.32 *Excavations inside the hillfort of Danebury, Hants. General view showing the density of occupation behind the southern defences (photograph: Danebury Trust).*

Whether or not all the developed hillforts which performed central-place functions became concentrations of population, with communities moving in from the countryside around, is difficult yet to say. At Danebury this was evidently the case (Cunliffe 2000, 184–5), and the absence of Middle Iron Age settlement around Maiden Castle would suggest a similar situation here. There are indications that, in its developed phase, the hillfort of Barbury, Wilts., may also have been the only centre of population within a large area but it is not yet clear how widespread this phenomenon of nucleation was: nor is it apparent what the socio-political imperatives driving this may have been (pp. 590–3).

In summary, it may be said that of the hillforts of Wessex a broad three-phase development can be recognized between 800 and 100 BC. In the earliest phase (800–600) large communal hill-top enclosures were built, probably to serve as bases for the autumn and winter management of stock. At the same time ‘aristocratic’ settlements were strongly defended but probably more to display status than to provide protection. Some time during the sixth century the system underwent

a significant change when the first early hillforts were built in considerable numbers across the face of the countryside. Some, at least, of these were occupied by substantial communities and some bear evidence of defence and attack. Finally, in the fourth century a few forts rose to positions of dominance. They were massively re-defended and formed focal points in well-defined territories. Internal occupation in some, but by no means all, was intense and continuous and there is good reason to suppose that these served as central places in complex redistribution networks. They were also religious foci and may well have been centres of coercive power for their region. The further implications of these developments will be explored in [chapter 21](#).

Winklebury



Danebury

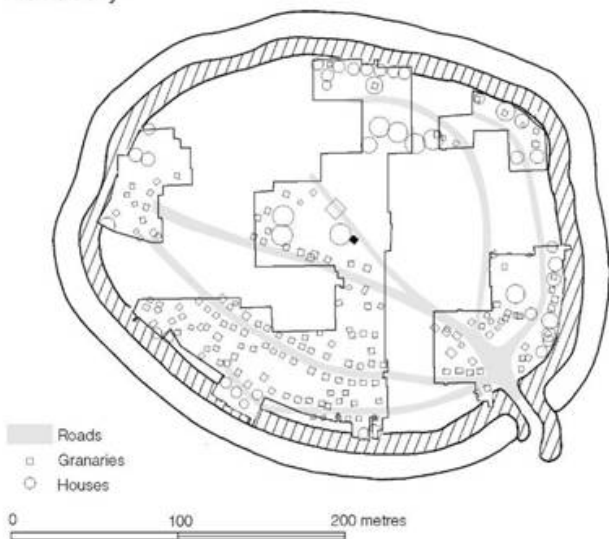


Figure 15.33 The interiors of the hillforts of Winklebury and Danebury, Hants in the Middle Iron Age (source: Cunliffe 1984c with modifications).

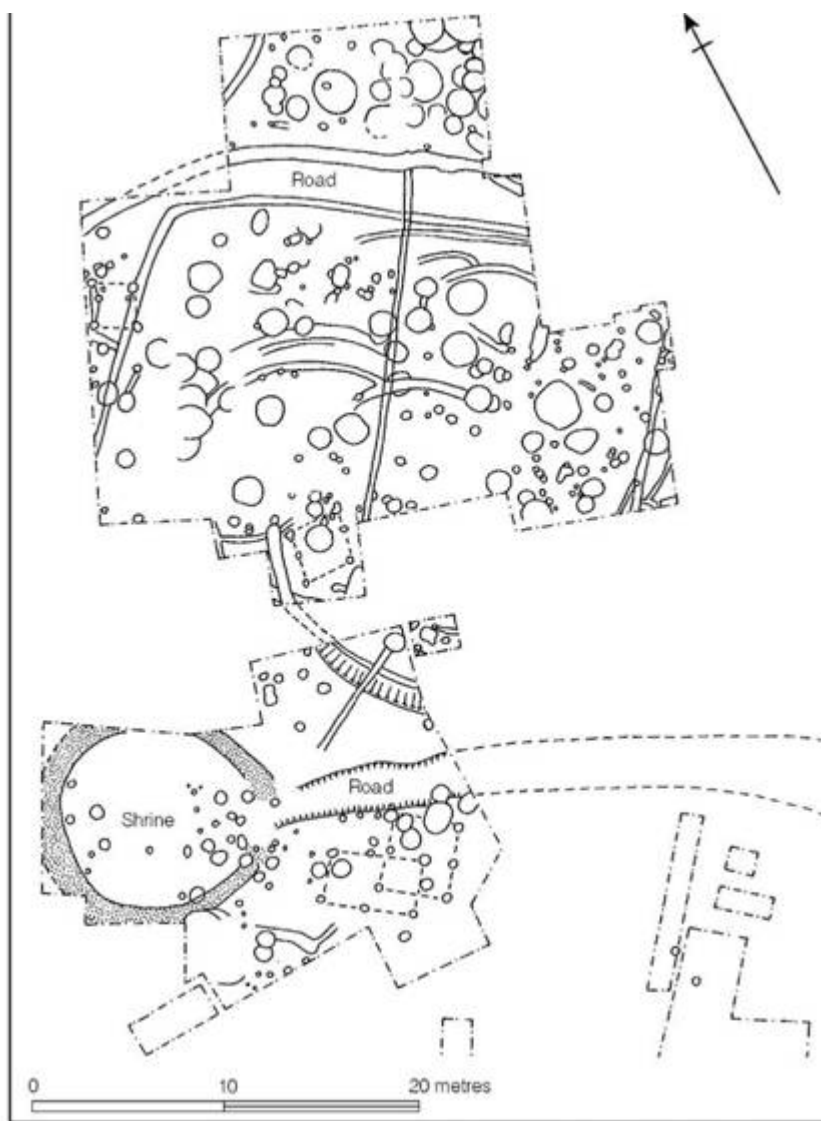


Figure 15.34 *The settlement plan within Maiden Castle, Dorset (source: Wheeler 1943).*

The Cotswolds and the Northamptonshire uplands

The general pattern of development outlined for Wessex seems to hold true for the hillforts of the Jurassic Ridge (Cunliffe 1984b). Norbury Camp, Glos., clearly belongs in the early hill-top enclosure category, while others, including Nottingham Hill and Borough Hill, conform to the general characteristics of the class. At Norbury Camp four-post structures, possibly fodder racks, were found, and both

Nottingham Hill and Borough Hill produced Late Bronze Age swords.

Early hillforts are well represented. The best known is Crickley Hill, Glos., where an extensive programme of excavation has been undertaken. The earliest defence (Crickley period 2) consisted of a massive timber-laced rampart with a well-built external stone face: the radiocarbon dates suggest a construction date in the seventh or sixth century BC. Inside, the principal features to be recovered are four-post structures and several large rectangular structures which are either houses (as the excavator prefers) or rows of four-, five- and six-post storage buildings, some of them in fenced enclosures. In the late sixth or early fifth century the defences were reconstructed and an outer hornwork was added to protect the gate ([Figure 15.16](#)). The settlement continued to develop, with several circular houses now added, dominated by a massive roundhouse built just inside the gate.

Other forts of the early period, defined by more limited excavation, include Leckhampton, Shenberrow, Glos., Little Solisbury, Avon, Chastleton and Lyneham, Oxon., Bredon, Worcs., and Hunsbury, Northants. As in Wessex, early hillforts seem to be prolific but many of them ceased to be occupied after the end of the Early Iron Age.

Much less is known of the developed hillforts of the Middle Iron Age, but Kimsbury and Sodbury are likely, on typological grounds, to belong to this group while excavation at Bredon, Heref. and Worcs., Bury Wood Camp, Wilts., Hunsbury, Northants, and Madmarsden, Oxon., have produced evidence of intensive occupation in the fourth to first centuries BC and may be compared to the developed hillforts providing central-place functions scattered across Wessex.

The Chilterns

The hillforts of the Chilterns have not been extensively examined but from what little is known of them they appear to follow the broad trends outlined for Wessex and the Cotswolds. The Chiltern ridge is much like the chalk downs of Sussex and presents some evidence to suggest that it too was divided into distinct territories ([Figure 15.35](#)), but the situation is complicated by the fact that the chalk ridge is seldom dissected by rivers except in the case of the Cam and the Lea. Nevertheless, the scarp slope rivers created partial natural barriers, which were projected across the ridge by artificial boundaries composed of lines of banks and ditches; Dray's Ditches, Beds., the only boundary of this kind to be examined, has proved to be a complex structure composed of multiple ditches and timber stockades originating probably as early as the late second millennium. Within all but one of the six territories thus defined lies a single major hillfort (Dyer 1961). Subsidiary forts are known in three of the regions, but the absence of adequate excavations prevents any firm conclusion as

to their date or development. The general impression given by this pattern, however, is that the eastern Chilterns were subjected to the same social and economic pressures as the South Downs, leading eventually to the domination of each territory by a single fort.

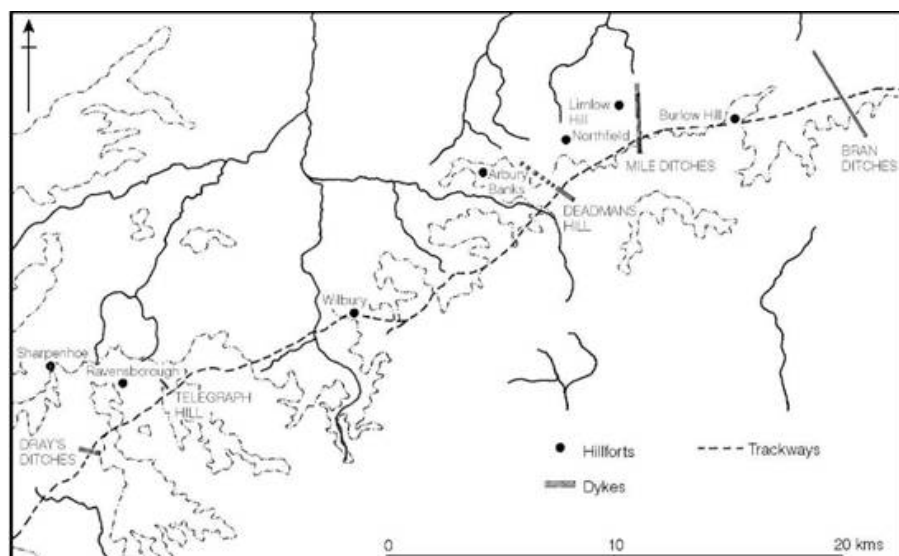


Figure 15.35 Territorial boundaries in the eastern Chilterns (source: Dyer 1961).

East Anglia and adjacent areas

The region east of the river Ouse which includes parts of Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk has produced a small number of defended enclosures of hillfort proportions, most of which are not sited on hills, which is hardly surprising given the undramatic topography of East Anglia. Although most have been examined, if only cursorily, surprisingly little is known of them (Davies *et al.* 1991; Evans and Knight 2002). Their chronology is largely undefined, though where evidence exists a Middle Iron Age date seems likely. The most outstanding feature of the regional group is a preference for circularity, a feature exhibited by Arbury Camp and Wandlebury, Cambs., and Wareham and South Creake, Norfolk. It is possible that this tradition dates back to the circular forts of the Late Bronze Age which were a characteristic settlement type in eastern Britain (above, pp. 39–43).

The Welsh borderland

Between the valley of the river Severn and the mountains of Wales

is a zone of broken land some 50 km wide, densely studded with hillforts (e.g. Hogg 1976). Many of them have been subjected to limited campaigns of excavation but six have been excavated on a scale sufficient to enable their structural sequences and interior occupation to be assessed: Moel y Gaer, Breiddin, Dinorben, Croft Ambrey, Credenhill and Midsummer Hill.

Among the earliest is the Breiddin, a massive enclosure of some 30 ha. The enclosing feature at this stage consisted of a comparatively slight bank less than a metre high, into the front of which had been set two rows of posts about a metre apart, with the individual posts in each row spaced at the same interval. Radiocarbon dates suggest that construction took place some time in the tenth to eighth centuries BC – a date borne out by a collection of Late Bronze Age finds from the interior. Several other sites have produced evidence of enclosure in the first half of the first millennium BC. At Moel y Gaer the later hillfort is preceded by a palisaded enclosure, of which two (possibly three) lines, not necessarily contemporary, have been traced. The outermost of these, which consists of posts set at 1 m intervals in a low bank, is not at all unlike the defensive structure at Breiddin. The Moel y Gaer palisades are undated, but within them, pre-dating the first rampart, was a settlement of post-ring roundhouses with radiocarbon dates indicating occupation in the seventh century or possibly a little earlier (Figure 15.36). At Dinorben five lines of palisade trench were traced (Guilbert 1980) but they are undated and it is difficult to distinguish what of the internal occupation was contemporary with them.

At all three sites the early palisaded enclosures were later replaced with ramparts. At Breiddin the rampart of stone-faced soil and rubble was built over the earlier bank and appears to have been associated with a number of roundhouses some of which produced radiocarbon dates implying occupation centring on the fifth century, but the rampart seems to date from after the fourth century BC. At Moel y Gaer the timber-laced stone-faced rampart was built within the palisade lines, and inside the new enclosure an orderly settlement of stake-built roundhouses interspersed with regular rows of four-post structures was laid out (Figure 15.36). Radiocarbon dates indicate a sixth- to fourth-century span but the ordered plan of the settlement and the fact that no structures were rebuilt might suggest a single-phase occupation of a brief duration. At Dinorben the earliest rampart, comprising a timber-framed structure with stone facing (Guilbert 1979a), was built in the sixth century. Internal occupation was dense but it is difficult to say which features belonged to this period.

The evidence, so far discussed, presents a tolerably consistent picture. The earliest enclosures were palisaded and these seem to have

enclosed substantial settlements dating to within the first half of the first millennium BC. Thereafter, ramparts were built, either with box structures faced with stone walls or with stone facing alone, some time in the period of the sixth to fourth centuries. The evidence from Moel y Gaer shows that the contemporary settlements were carefully laid out though some may have been short-lived.

The situation during the Middle and Late Iron Age is rather less clear but all three forts appear to have continued in use. At Breiddin a number of large four-post structures apparently followed the phase dominated by circular buildings, producing a range of radiocarbon dates suggesting occupation within the fourth to third centuries (Musson 1976, 302), while at Dinorben dates for interior occupation range from the mid-sixth to the mid-fourth centuries (Guilbert 1980). At Moel y Gaer, the rebuilding of the rampart was preceded by a single date of mid-fourth to mid-third century and seems to have been associated with rectangular structures represented now only by rubble platforms.

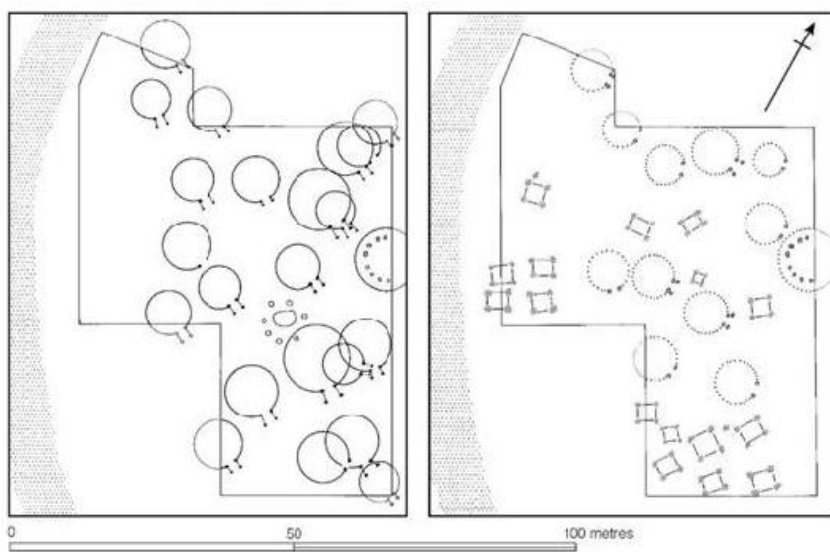


Figure 15.36 *The interior of the hillfort of Moel y Gaer, Clwyd. The early phase of ring-groove houses is replaced in the later phase by ring-post houses and four-post 'granaries' (source: Guilbert 1976).*

The hillfort of Wrekin, Salop, provided some additional evidence. Here two separate defensive circuits presumably represented at least two major phases in the history of the site. A limited area excavation between the two circuits provided clear evidence of a number of large

four-post structures, rebuilt many times on the same sites, for which radiocarbon dates were obtained suggesting construction within the period from the eighth to the fifth century. These buildings were presumably contemporary with the outer (earliest) rampart. The inner circuit probably represents a new phase of activity dating to the fifth/fourth century or perhaps a little later. After this the outer area seems to have come back into use.

So far the discussion has focused on the hillforts of the northern borderland. Turning now to the south, three well-excavated sites are of considerable importance: Croft Ambrey, Salop, and Midsummer Hill and Credenhill, Heref. and Worcs. At Croft Ambrey two major phases of defence were recognized: the 'Plateau Camp' of some 2.2 ha defended by a small dump-constructed rampart and the extended or 'Main Camp', comprising an enclosure of 3.6 ha defended by a massive dump-constructed rampart. At Midsummer Hill the defences appear to be of only one phase closely similar in form to the Main Camp fortifications at Croft Ambrey. A single radiocarbon date is available for an early phase in the gate development. No firm conclusions can safely be based on such slight evidence, but taken on face value it might suggest a phase of hillfort building (and rebuilding) some time in the fifth to third centuries. The associated pottery is typologically Middle Iron Age.

The area excavations in the interiors of Croft Ambrey, Midsummer Hill and Credenhill showed that considerable areas close to the ramparts were occupied by rows of large four-post structures which had been reconstructed many times on the same sites. The size of the structures, the ordered layout and the continuity of building are closely comparable to the pattern of structures found in the southern sector of Danebury during the Middle Iron Age.

While it would be wrong to interpret the evidence from the Welsh borderland in too precise a manner, the broad sequence of development has much in common with the Wessex pattern. In the earliest period (ninth to seventh centuries) lightly defended hill-top enclosures were comparatively widespread; these were replaced frequently on the same sites, with box-structured ramparts in the seventh or sixth century. The interior features of these early hillforts leave little doubt that some at least were occupied by ordered settlements of considerable size. Later, at some time centring on the sixth or fifth century, there was a phase of massive hillfort building, or rebuilding, creating fortified sites showing all the characteristics of the developed hillforts of the south. It is possible that this development was restricted to the southern zone of the borderland, leaving the forts of the north to evolve as local pressures dictated. This apparent north-south divide is also dramatically reflected in the material culture of

the Middle Iron Age and hints at a real socio-political divide. The question is one to which we shall return in [chapter 21](#).

Central Britain: the Pennines

The hillforts of the Pennines are few, but most have been subjected to some archaeological exploration showing that they all belong to the Late Bronze to Early Iron Age. Mam Tor was abandoned in the eighth or seventh century, Portfield does not appear to outlast the seventh century, while Almondbury and Castercliff were occupied in the sixth to fifth centuries but not thereafter. The Pennine forts, therefore, follow the same pattern of development as those of southern Britain but their abandonment by the Middle Iron Age shows a marked divergence with the socio-political development of the south and the Welsh borderland.

Little is known of the nature and density of occupation within the Pennine forts, but at Ingle-borough, one of the highest and most exposed forts in Britain, nineteen hut circles have been recorded in the interior, implying some level of occupation if only by transhumant groups. They are however entirely undated, as is the fortification.

The latest hillfort development in the west and north

Throughout much of southern Britain there is clear evidence to show that a number of developed hillforts were abandoned towards the beginning of the first century BC. In the west of Britain, however, some were in occupation at the time of the Roman Conquest when, we are told, in the south-west alone, Vespasian had to destroy twenty fortified sites. Impressive evidence of ultimate pre-Roman occupation is provided by Hod Hill, Dorset, where the fort was packed with circular huts, some of them provided with annexes, some set in enclosures ([Figures 8.7](#) and [8.8](#)). Whether or not occupation was continuous from the end of the Middle Iron Age (c. 100 BC) to the time of the Conquest in AD 43 it is impossible to say on the available evidence. At any event it is likely that the densely settled appearance at the time of the invasion was accentuated by refugees seeking the protection of the old fortifications. The remarkable plan of the south-east sector of the enclosure, which survives because the area has never been ploughed ([Figure 8.7](#)), gives the impression of a heavily built-up complex as it would have been at the time of the Roman attack in AD 43. More than forty-five circular houses can be recognized, which, if the same density is applied to the entire enclosure, would have meant a total of about 270 houses. Allowing for some to represent

abandoned or replaced structures, and a unit of three persons to a house, the potential population can hardly have been less than 500 and may have approached 1,000.

Only one small area has been examined by excavation ([Figure 8.8](#)), close to the road leading from the Steepleton Gate. Several circular huts were uncovered, two of them with annexes. One of the huts, set in a rectangular ditched enclosure, was thought by the excavator to be a chieftain's hut at the time of the Roman Conquest since it provided a focus for the ballista attack which the fort suffered under the Romans.

To what extent Hod Hill is a special case it is impossible to say. Other forts in the south-west were evidently in use at about the time of the invasion. At South Cadbury and probably at Maiden Castle the rampart was strengthened in the first century AD and at both forts there is evidence of internal occupation, though the extent and intensity is difficult to define. At South Cadbury some decline in the intensity of occupation was noted before the beginning of the first century AD. While there is no reason to reject the idea of continuous occupation from the Middle Iron Age, that the late occupation was intermittent or a short-lived response to the imminence of Rome seems a possibility.

In other parts of Britain, a number of hillforts show signs of a dense internal settlement. North Wales has several such sites, including Dinorben, Denbigh., and Garn Boduan, Carn Fadrun, Conway Mountain and Tre'r Ceiri in Caernarvonshire, each with numbers of huts ranging from nineteen to over 100 ([Figures 13.19](#) and [13.20](#)). Hogg's assessment of their significance has led him to propose a population density averaging about fifteen persons per acre (Hogg 1962, 22–3), which in terms of actual numbers gives a maximum of about 400 people living in Garn Boduan at any one time. Alcock (1965, 194), reconsidering the same evidence, offers the suggestion that the population approximated more closely to 700, a density averaging twenty-five per acre. Clearly, figures of this kind are open to many sources of error, but the order of magnitude is interesting since it approximates to the rough figures suggested above for Hod Hill. Hogg and Alcock differ again over the problem of permanent residence, Alcock preferring to suppose transhumance between forts and the lowland settlements rather than permanent occupation. Certainly, the extreme climate of the region might weigh in favour of this. The matter is highly complex and cannot easily be solved in the absence of extensive excavation, and without good dating evidence there is little chance of assessing the chronological development of any of these sites.

Most of the large Scottish oppida show similar signs of intensive occupation rising to more than 300 houses within the 16.2 ha of

Eildon Hill North, Roxburgh., the principal site in the territory of the Selgovae. Allowing for undiscovered huts in the area beneath a plantation, Feachem (1966, 79) estimates the population to be between 2,000 and 3,000, but this is based on the assumption that all huts were occupied at once, which excavation has since shown not to be the case. Further south, at Yeavering Bell, Northumberland, a 5.3 ha enclosure contains about 130 huts which, if they were all occupied at the same time, might point to a community of at least 500 souls. The same functional problems arise in Scotland as in Wales: were the forts permanently occupied or not, and over what time span were the houses built? The answers are not as yet forthcoming.

The late use or reuse of hillforts is a question still fraught with difficulties. The simplest generalization which can be offered is that, in the centre south and south-east, developed hill- forts were abandoned on a large scale after the beginning of the first century BC as the result of fundamental socio-economic changes which had gripped the area following the establishment of extensive contacts with the Continent. In the west and north, however, many forts appear to have continued in use to the time of the Conquest, and in some cases well into the Roman period, though whether or not occupation was continuous it is impossible to say. In intermediate regions, like the territory of the Durotriges and Dobunni, the picture is complex. While the old forts may have remained in occupation the balance of the evidence would suggest that intensity of use had dramatically declined after the beginning of the first century BC. It is, however, abundantly clear that many of them had been refurbished by the time that the Roman threat had appeared. Vespasian, faced with more than twenty to subdue, would have been all too aware of the problem.

Fécamp style defences

Sir Mortimer Wheeler's campaign of excavation and survey in northern France (Wheeler and Richardson 1957) focused attention on a distinctive form of defensive system dating to the time of the Caesarian campaigns in the middle of the first century BC. The characteristics were a massive dump rampart fronted by a wide, shallow, flat-bottomed ditch. This type he named after the hillfort of Fécamp. The possibility that defensive systems of this kind were adopted in southeastern Britain has been widely discussed (Ward Perkins 1944; Cotton 1961a, 66). But several of the sites previously canvassed are now regarded as doubtful (T.K. Green 1979; F.H. Thompson 1985). Two, however, still remain as distinct possibilities: *Calleva*, Hants, and Loose, Kent.

The fortifications of *Calleva* enclose an area of about 35 ha and

belong to the category of *enclosed oppida* defined below. They were originally thought to date to the post-Conquest period (Boon 1969) but subsequent excavations suggest redating to the late first century BC (Fulford 1987, 275–7; Fulford and Timby 2000). The enclosure at Quarry Wood, Loose, can also be classified as an enclosed oppidum. Its date is less certain but would appear to lie within the late first-century BC to early first-century AD bracket.

Both were built afresh at previously undefended locations. That the style of the defences was similar to that adopted in northern Gaul need occasion no surprise since the two regions were in close contact throughout the first century BC and early first century AD.

The enclosed oppida in the south-east

Over much of south-east Britain during the first century BC hill-top fortifications went out of general use, and there appears to have been a corresponding shift of concentrations of population to valley-side sites, often to locations which controlled major river crossings. From what little evidence is at present available, it would seem that while some of these settlements were wholly or partially enclosed by earthworks, others may have been open and undefended (Cunliffe 1976b, 145–53). Those sites with defences have been called *enclosed oppida* (Figure 15.38).

A clear example of the type is provided by the settlement at Winchester, of which the Oram's Arbour earthwork forms a part. The settlement occupies a valley-side location and is defended on at least three sides by a V-shaped ditch and dump-constructed rampart defining an area of some 20 ha. Pottery from the ditch and from the occupation within the enclosure belongs to the second and first centuries BC. In Kent, Quarry Wood Camp, Loose, provides a comparable, though less well-dated, example. Here an enclosure of more than 12 ha was sited on sloping ground overlooking a stream. The rampart was of dump construction, but unlike Winchester the ditch, at least in its latest phase, suggests a flat-bottomed profile; it may however have been preceded by a ditch of V-section. To this same category of enclosure would appear to belong the earthwork of Wheathampstead, Herts., but some doubt has been cast on the nature of the site (Dyer 1976b).

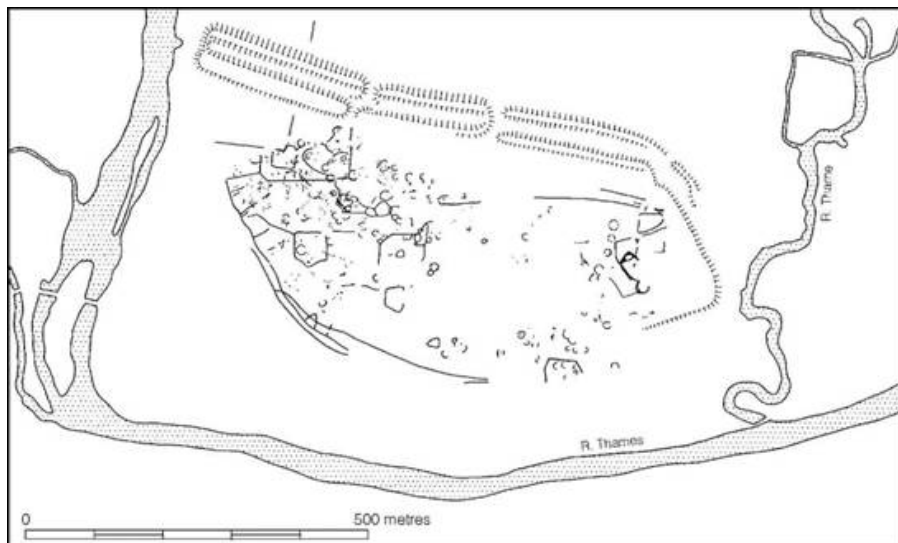


Figure 15.37 *The enclosed oppidum of Dyke Hills, Oxon. (source: Hingley and Miles 1984).*

Closely related types of settlement are found sited in low-lying situations near to rivers. Dyke Hills (Dorchester), Oxon., is perhaps the best surviving example (Figure 15.37). Its multiple defences now enclose an area of approximately 46 ha at the confluence of the Thame and the Thames. A shift in the river course in the last 2,000 years has probably increased the apparently defended area, but aerial photography shows dense occupation covering about 25 ha. No excavation has been undertaken in the enclosure and the site must therefore remain undated. At the comparable site of Salmonsbury, Glos., however, a multiple-ditched enclosure lying close to the river Windrush, excavation has produced ample evidence of first-century occupation. Another substantial ditched enclosure dating to this period has been identified beneath Abingdon at the confluence of the Thames and the river Ock. The occupation area is defined by three concentric ditches and occupies an area of 33 ha. To this same category the defended enclosure at Silchester belongs. The Inner Earthwork (Boon 1969) defines a polygonal enclosure of about 35 ha which is now thought to be of pre-Roman date. Within there is evidence of intensive and regularly planned occupation.

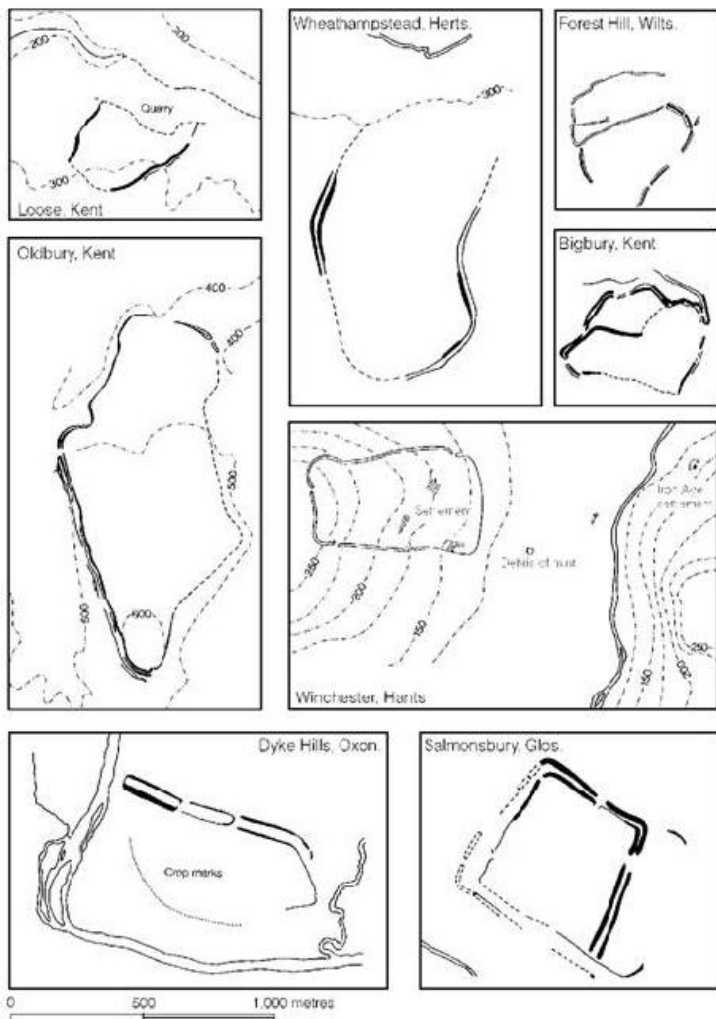


Figure 15.38 Comparative plans of enclosed oppida (source: Cunliffe 1976b with amendments and additions).

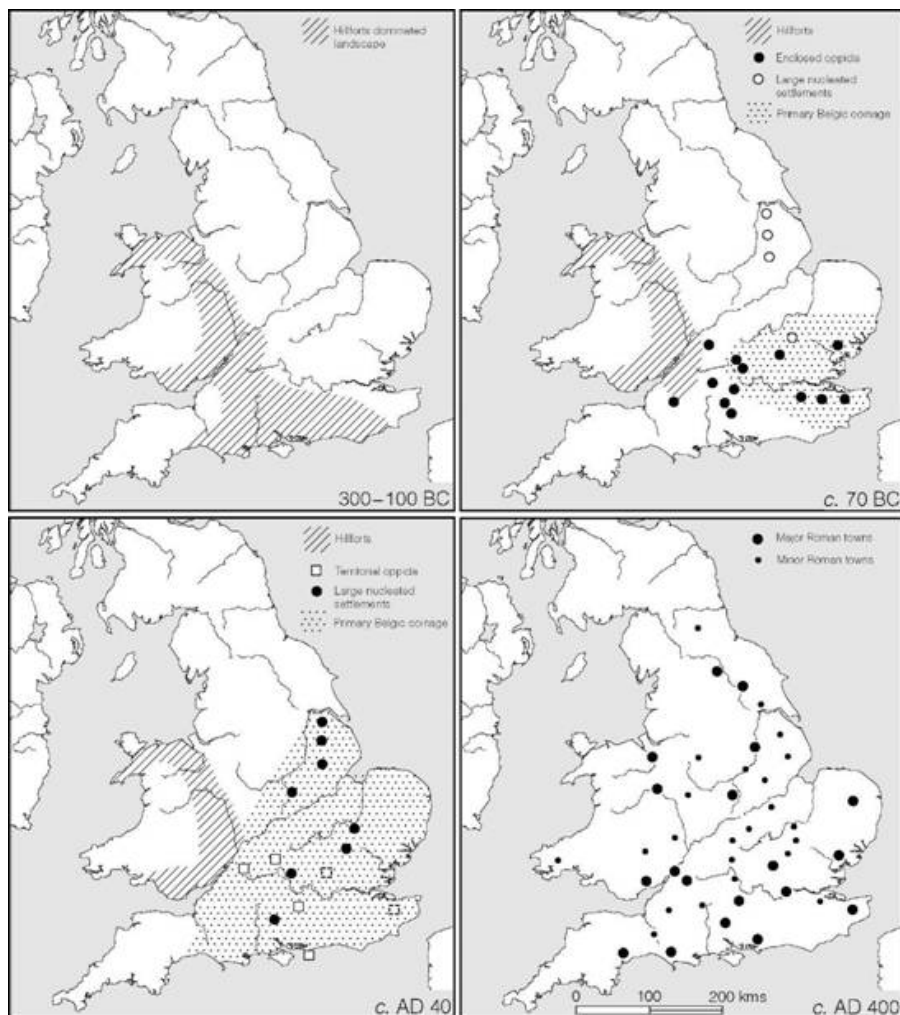


Figure 15.39 Summary maps showing spread of urban sites in Britain (source: Cunliffe 1976b with amendments).

Comparatively few enclosed oppida have yet been recognized in valley-side and valley-bottom locations, but the strong possibility exists that more will be found now that the category has been defined. In each of the examples noted above, the settlements would appear to have developed during the late second or first century BC in positions chosen specifically for their economic importance in relation to route-ways. The further implications of this will be considered below (pp. 600–2).

Although it is true that the majority of hillforts had gone out of use in the south-east by the early first century BC, a few hill-top locations

continued to develop. In Kent two such sites are known: Oldbury, in west Kent between the Medway and the Darent, and Bigbury, near Canterbury, both of which have produced finds suggesting second-first-century BC and early first-century AD use. Radiocarbon dates from Bigbury confirm that occupation here began in the second century BC. Another example is the earthwork of Forest Hill, Wilts., which occupies a prominent position on a ridge overlooking the river Kennet and encloses an area of about 11 ha. No excavations have yet been undertaken here. These sites, and others of similar type, can best be regarded as varieties of the generalized enclosed oppida category and should be distinguished from earlier hillforts which may have continued to have been used as convenient sites for farms or small rural settlements. Only where extensive excavations have been carried out will the distinction be possible to make.

The enclosed oppida represent the last stage of 'hillfort' development in south-eastern Britain. Thereafter open settlements of urban character continued to develop ([Figure 15.39](#)). Some, e.g. Verulamium, Braughing, Canterbury and Old Sleaford, were apparently without significant boundaries, while other locations were delimited, often at a considerable distance from the settled nucleus, by massive linear dykes. Sites like Camulodunum, Selsey and Bagendon, together with Silchester and the North Oxfordshire Grim's Ditch, fall into this category of *territorial oppida* (Cunliffe 1976b, 135–6), and have been discussed individually in detail above ([chapters 7](#) and [8](#)).

The nature and development of enclosed oppida, territorial oppida and open urban settlements is at present ill-understood, largely because excavation on such sites has been minimal. It is therefore highly likely that, when more work has been carried out, the classification offered above will be shown to be oversimple. In the meantime, however, the sequence – from developed hillforts to enclosed oppida and from enclosed oppida to open urban settlements and territorial oppida – fairly contains the available evidence. In all probability this progress represents the change from a pre-urban to a fully urban system.

Food-producing strategies

The processes by which a community produces its basic food supply are conditioned by climate, soil and the technological capability of society at the time. All three are variable. Climate, as we have seen (pp. 33–4), can change even over comparatively short periods, soil can degenerate and lose its nutrients through overuse, while better tools or new varieties of cereal can be introduced at any time. There is a dynamic relationship between these three constraining factors. Together they control the food-producing strategy, but since the variables are constantly, if often only imperceptibly, changing, so the food-producing regime is never entirely static. Another factor adds to the variety. A country such as Britain, with an immensely varied geomorphology and microclimate, is a palimpsest of different bioclimatic regions. Each provides a framework within which society has to mould its systems. Thus, in attempting to study the way in which Iron Age communities raised their food we are dealing not with a single system but with many, each with its own trajectory of change.

The evidence at our disposal is of differing types and qualities. The analysis of pollen from peat deposits provides an invaluable yardstick. In the west and north the data are tolerably good (Turner 1981; Wilson 1983; Caseldine 1980; Caseldine and Maguire 1981; Dumayne-Peaty 1998) but from the chalklands of central southern Britain sequences are few (Waton 1982). Against this background the cereals themselves can be assessed. Palaeobotany has come a long way since Helbaek's pioneering study of 1952 based entirely upon seed impressions found in pottery. Techniques of flotation, whereby carbonized grains are separated from soil, were not developed on any systematic scale until the late 1960s and then it was only Martin Jones' seminal study of the plant remains from Ashville, Oxon., published in 1978, that showed how much could be gained from a thorough integrated study of a single site. The debate was further advanced by Gordon Hillman's critical discussion of our techniques for reconstructing crop husbandry practices from charred remains (1981) in which he stressed the importance of studying, from surviving residues, the entire range of activities associated with crop processing. Since then it has been customary for all excavations to be sampled for plant remains and several regional overviews have been published,

most notably by van der Veen (1992) and M. Jones (1995, 1996).

The study of animal bones has a longer pedigree, but even by as late as 1980 very few large assemblages had been published and those which had were usually simply treated. The work of Annie Grant (1984a) on the bone assemblages from Danebury, Hants, shows what can be gained from the thorough numerical study of a large and well-stratified assemblage. Not all soils, however, preserve bone, and there are large tracts of the country, where acid soil conditions prevail, from which no useful bone assemblages can be expected. Differential survival will always unbalance the picture.

A further source of useful data is provided by a study of insect remains from waterlogged situations. The species present are a ready indicator of local conditions and may also reflect on the activities being undertaken in the immediate environment. The impact which such a study could have on the understanding of an Iron Age settlement was demonstrated for the first time by Mark Robinson for the flood plain settlement at Farmoor in Oxfordshire (Lambrick and Robinson 1979). Finally, the study of terrestrial molluscs in ancient soils provides an invaluable tool in reconstructing the vegetational setting of sites and in showing how landscape use has changed with time (Evans 1972).

While the study of the faunal and floral remains themselves are central to an understanding of food-producing strategies, an assessment of the technical competence of the communities and the field monuments which they created has much to offer. Tools are well represented in the archaeological record by those iron parts which remain (Figure 16.1), and from these it is possible to deduce much of the general technological level at which society functioned (Rees 1979). In addition we have the physical marks of man on the landscape – the clearance cairns, lynched fields, ditched fields, linear boundaries, corrals, etc. – which resulted from society imposing its agricultural and stock management schemes on the land. Taken together the evidence is rich and varied.

In the pages to follow we will first consider the range and potential of the plants and animals so essential to society's wellbeing, before proceeding to consider the evidence currently available for outlining regional strategies.

Plant cultivates and agrarian technology

Over most of the inhabited parts of south-east Britain, grain production formed the basis of the economy. Throughout the second millennium, emmer wheat (*Triticum dicoccum*) and barley, in particular the naked variety (*Hordeum tetrasticum*), constituted the

main crops though not to the exclusion of other varieties, but late in the second and early in the first millennium two changes became apparent: first, naked barley was replaced by the hulled variety (*Hordeum hexastichum*) so that by the middle of the first millennium the percentage of the naked type had been reduced to less than a third, and second, the popularity of emmer wheat began to give way to spelt (*Triticum spelta*). This change is part of a broader pattern of diversification which becomes noticeable at this time (Jones 1984, 121–2).

The implications of the change in staples can best be appreciated by considering the characteristics of the various cereals. Emmer, while growing well on most soils, is particularly well suited to light, comparatively dry soils like those of the chalk and limestone uplands, but since it is susceptible to frost it is not well adapted to winter sowing. Spelt, however, grows well on heavy soils and is a hardy variety able to withstand cold, wind and disease (Jones 1981, 106). Moreover it delivers a higher yield than emmer (van der Veen and Palmer 1997). Barley, on the other hand, whether naked or hulled, may be grown practically anywhere in Britain except in areas of poor drainage or high acidity (*ibid.*, 105).

The growth in popularity in spelt could, then, be taken to imply the colonization of heavier soils. The spread of cultivation to a wider range of ecological niches is supported by the settlement evidence in the south-east of the country, which shows that farmsteads were now moving on to heavy clay soils, and by a study of weeds of cultivation associated with carbonized plant remains. From two Hampshire chalkland sites, Micheldever Wood and Danebury, seeds of the acid-loving weed *Chrysanthemum segetum* have been discovered, implying that, by the Middle Iron Age, the clay-with-flints capping to the chalk downs was being exploited. Weeds from damp locations, found at Danebury, show that crops were being brought into the site from nearby river flood plains. A similar study of the weeds of cultivation found with the crops at Ashville, Oxon., leaves little doubt but that all the easily exploitable soil in the region was being farmed. The introduction of spelt on a large scale would therefore have had considerable advantages, not least at a time of population pressure, in allowing new land to be brought under cultivation. The change-over from emmer to spelt during the Early Iron Age seems to have affected much of southern and central Britain and has been traced north as far as the Tees, beyond which point emmer remained the dominant wheat (van der Veen 1992).

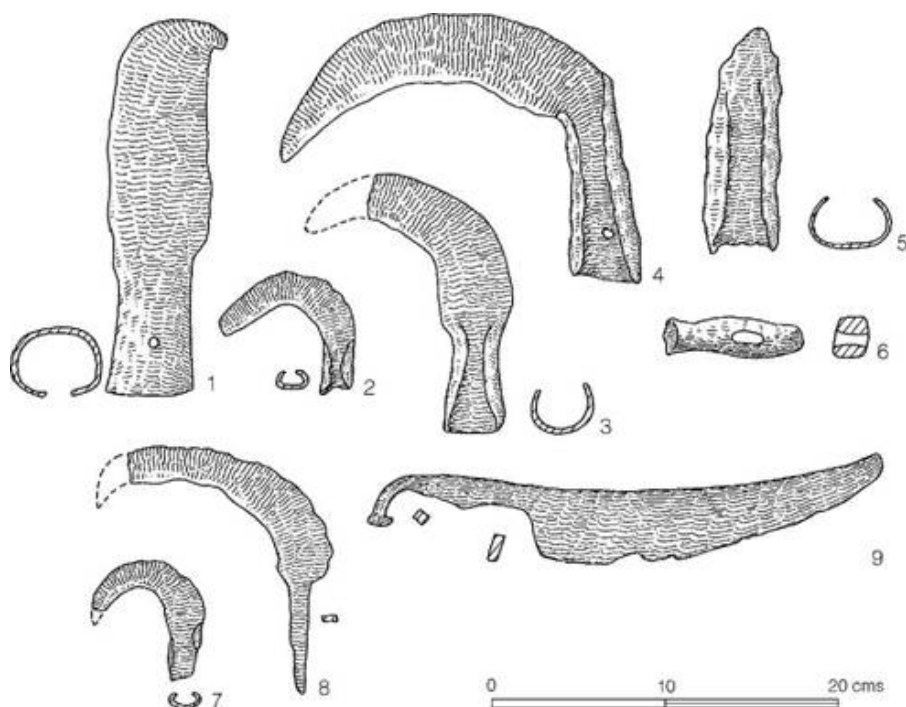


Figure 16.1 Iron tools: 1 bill-hook from the Caburn, Sussex; 2, 3, 4, 7, 8 reaping hooks from Barbury Castle, Wilts.; 5 ploughshare from the Caburn, Sussex; 6 hammer from the Caburn, Sussex; 9 knife from Barbury Castle, Wilts. (sources: Barbury Castle, MacGregor and Simpson 1963; the Caburn, Curwen and Curwen 1927).

On the Hampshire chalkland a detailed study of crop remains from a number of sites has suggested that in the Early Iron Age spelt and six-row barley were probably sown together in the autumn as one crop or maslin (known as beremancorn in the medieval period) (G. Campbell 2000), but by the Middle Iron Age, while maslin continued to be autumn-sown, spring-sown barley crops were introduced. The advantages of introducing spring sowing were considerable. Not only could the workload be spread but so too could the risk of crop failure. Moreover the extended harvest would mean that fresh grain was becoming available over a period of time as stored supplies might have been running low.

Further diversification was introduced in the Late Iron Age with the regular appearance of the additional crops of oats and Celtic beans. These would also have helped to spread the risk, but there may have been another factor influencing diversification – the decline in fertility of free- draining light soils which had, by this time, been under

cultivation for more than 2,000 years. Evidence in support of this is varied. At Ashville it was possible to chart a gradual increase of leguminous weeds commonly associated with decreasing levels of soil nitrogen, and similar data are becoming widely available from central southern Britain (Jones 1984, 121–2). It may also be that the increase in periodontal disease in sheep at Danebury is related to the declining quality of the pasture (Grant 1984a). The dynamics of soil fertility could provide an important constraining variable in the study of Iron Age society: it is a subject well deserving of further concerted research.

Towards the end of the Iron Age there is evidence of the growing popularity of bread wheat (*Triticum aestivocompactum*) – a variety which grows well on heavy silt or clay and is responsive to high nitrogen levels. Thus its increase may have been the direct result of the earlier colonization of heavy clay land. Significantly it has so far been found in quantity only in the south Midlands, at Bierton, Bucks., and Barton Court Farm, Oxon. – sites close to easily exploitable clay deposits. Its rise in popularity may be a factor more of regional specialization than of general change (Jones 1984, 123–4).

Apart from spelt and six-row barley other cereals were grown but on a much smaller scale. Rye (*Secale cereale*), another first-millennium introduction, occurs sporadically in Wessex, and oats (*Avena* spp.), of both the wild and cultivated varieties, are recorded from various sites, but only in small proportions until the Late Iron Age. Rye is a particularly hardy crop with a wide tolerance of soil types and is suitable for both autumn and spring sowing. Oats are less adaptable, preferring a milder and moister growing season. Since they are less hardy to frost they thrive better when spring sown. It was at the beginning of the first millennium that the Celtic bean (*Vicia faba*) made its first appearance in Britain and it became widespread later in central southern Britain. Since it has nitrogen-fixing qualities it is a useful break-crop to improve soil fertility, as well as being an acceptable food. Finally chess (*Bromus* spp.) occurs consistently in relatively small quantities, but this does not necessarily mean that it was sown as a crop in its own right.

The processes involved in reaping and storing the grain are open to debate. There is evidence from Hampshire to suggest that the crops may, at first, have been uprooted, accounting for the presence of rhizomes and seeds from short-growing weeds of cultivation among the deposits. The traditional way of gripping below the ear and cutting below the head using small iron cutting hooks may also have been employed at least from the Middle Iron Age onwards when rhizomes and tubers are no longer found with the crop waste. The balanced sickle makes its first appearance in the Late Iron Age.

If the crop had been reaped when ripe the next process would have been threshing, but if a damp or slightly unripe crop had been cut some form of drying process would have been necessary, perhaps the artificial parching of the ears in order to drive off excess moisture and to loosen the grain from the husk to facilitate threshing. There is no direct archaeological evidence for this, but the discovery of quantities of charred grain on archaeological sites and the fact that grain was dried in specially constructed ovens in the Roman period has led to the belief that corn drying was widely practised in the Iron Age. It is generally assumed that temporary ovens built of cob were constructed for this process, but another possibility is that drying may have been carried out on a larger scale on skins spread over pre-heated flint nodules. The indirect heat which the flints would have imparted would have been quite sufficient to dry the ears to the necessary degree, with the added advantage of keeping the grain away from the direct source of heat, thus cutting down risk of combustion. That accidents did happen, however, is shown by quantities of charred grain from various sites, including deposits from pits at Itford Hill, Sussex, Fifield Bavant, Wilts., Totternhoe, Beds., Danebury, Hants, and Little Solisbury, Somerset. This type of process would explain the vast quantities of fire-crackled flints ('pot-boilers') which are found on most of the settlement sites, usually lying in thick layers mixed up with charcoal in the so-called 'irregular working hollows'. Indeed the working hollows may well have been the sites where parching, among other activities, was carried out.

As soon as the ears were dried, they would in all probability have been threshed before storage, but some at least of the corn was stored in the ear as deposits found in the hillforts of Little Solisbury and Danebury show. Two different modes of storage are implied by the archaeological evidence: below-ground storage in pits and above-ground storage in timber-built 'granaries'. Both types of structure constantly occur together, particularly on the chalkland of south-eastern Britain.

Pits were normally of beehive, barrel or cylindrical shape ([Figure 16.2](#)). In the early period they tended to be small, but by the third and second centuries BC they usually averaged about 2 m deep. Pits dug into the solid chalk were not necessarily lined. Although some form of wicker lining tends to cut down wastage through mould growth by keeping the grain away from the damp sides of the pit, the degree of caking together of the outer crust of grain would not have differed greatly between lined and unlined pits so long as an airtight seal of clay or marl was placed over the pit mouth. The effort involved in providing each of the grain storage pits with a wicker lining may well have been considered unnecessary – at least in the chalk areas, where

the sides were firm and tolerably dry. Wicker linings have, however, been recorded at Dane's Camp, Worcs., Poxwell, Dorset, and Worlebury, Somerset, but there is nothing to show that these pits were used for storing grain rather than other commodities. Some pits were lined with dry-stone work, but these are restricted to areas where stone commonly occurs. On the Isle of Portland about seventy stone-lined pits of beehive shape were discovered, narrowed at the top so that they could be easily closed by a single slab. One of them contained a mass of carbonized grain. Various types of flooring have also been recorded, ranging from stone and wood to clay and sand.

A variety of pit forms is known, no doubt reflecting an equally wide range of function in addition to grain storage. Some, lined with clay, may have served for water storage, being linked by gullies to the eaves-drips of roofs; some were perhaps vats for such processes as tanning; while others may have been used as larders where dried or smoked meat may have been stored.

The second type of storage structure is the so-called 'granary' represented now by settings of four, five, six, or more rarely nine posts ([Figure 16.2](#)). These are usually supposed to have consisted of square or rectangular timber buildings, averaging 2.5–3.0 m in overall length, the floors of which were raised above ground level to allow the free circulation of air beneath and to prevent rodents from eating the stored supplies. Granaries occur widely over most of south-east Britain and into the Welsh borderland. Frequently, as at Little Woodbury and Walesland Rath, they were built on the periphery of the settlement, often against the boundary, to keep them as far removed as possible from the domestic activities of the settlement and the potential threat of fire, but at Gussage All Saints they cluster in the centre. Granaries have also been found in a number of hillforts (Gent 1983): at Danebury, Hants, for example, several rows of regularly spaced buildings separated by streets were restricted to one part of the fort, implying that a special area had been reserved for this type of storage activity: a similar pattern is apparent in some of the forts of the Welsh borderland. Not all of the four- or six-post buildings were necessarily granaries; some may have been sheds for storing a range of equipment or products, others may have served as accommodation or cooking shelters. But in all probability they were built as grain stores, whatever secondary uses they were later put to.

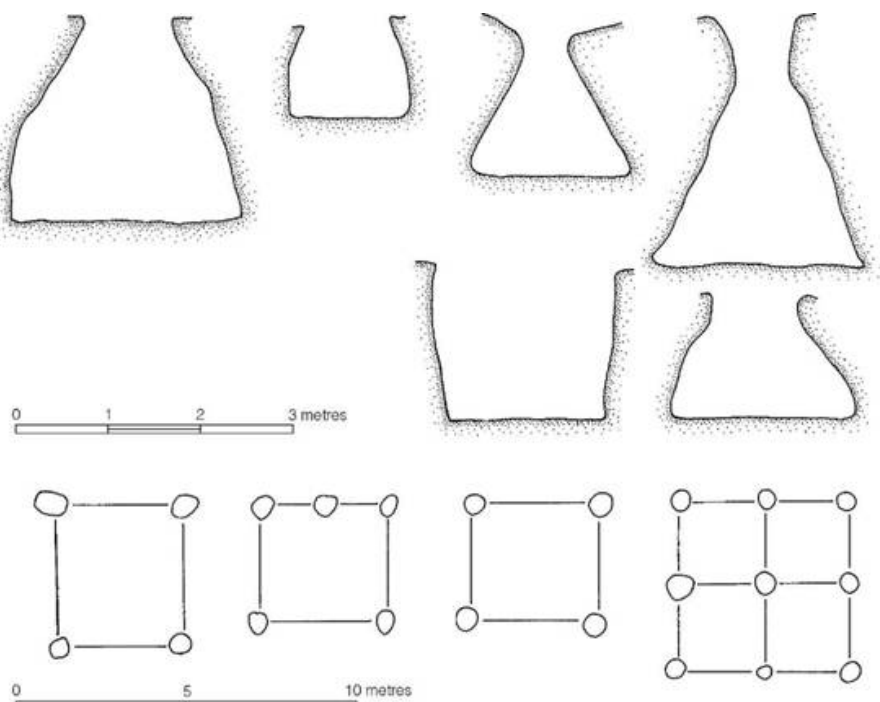


Figure 16.2 *Storage pit profiles and granary plans from Danebury, Hants (source: Cunliffe 1984a).*

The problem now arises as to how pits and granaries related to the storage needs of the community. It used to be thought that the seed grain, which would have amounted to probably about one-third of the crop, was stored in the granaries, while the corn for consumption was parched and tipped into pits. A series of experiments has shown, however, that there is no preservative advantage to be gained in parching grain before pit storage; moreover, the germination rate of grain stored below ground was found to be in excess of 90 per cent (P.J. Reynolds 1974). In other words, there is no reason to suppose that all seed corn was kept through the winter in granaries since it could equally as well have been stored in pits. Further experiments showed that for pit storage to be successful it was essential to keep the seal airtight. This would argue against the use of large pits as silos for consumption grain, for once they had been opened it would have been necessary for the contents to have been emptied quickly in order to prevent degeneration. Rapid use could, however, have been achieved if the contents of each pit was common property to be shared out between all members of the community, or was used for exchange for other goods. Clearly the problem of grain storage is fraught with

imponderables, but on balance it is simplest to accept the granaries as stores for the consumption cereal while the pits were used for the seed grain.

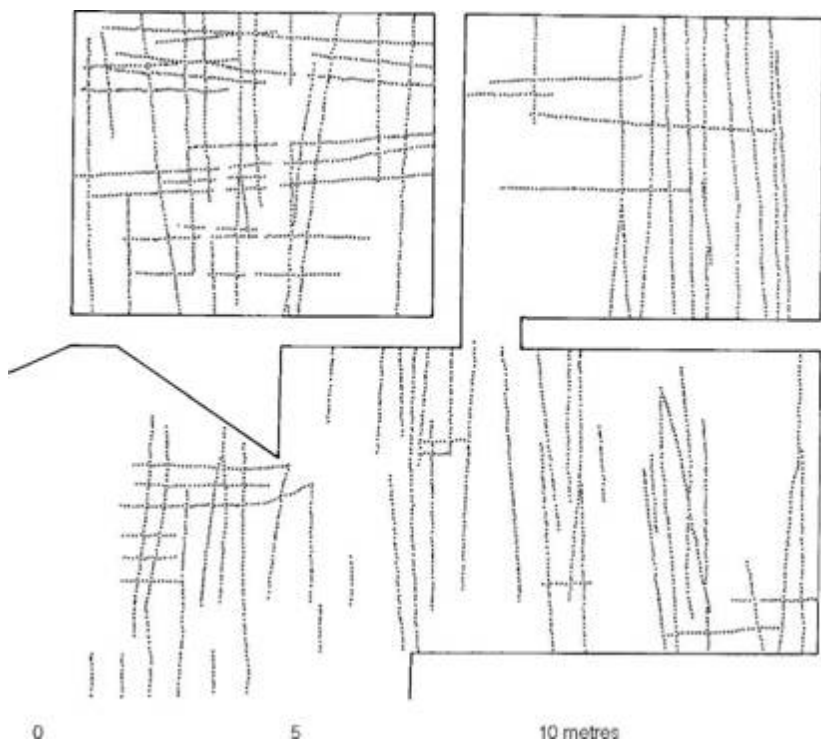


Figure 16.3 Plan of plough ruts discovered beneath a lynchet on Overton Down, Wilts. (source: P.J. Fowler 1967).

With the approach of spring the flocks and herds which throughout the winter would probably have been allowed free access to the fields, except those winter sown, would have been driven off to the fallow and to the upland pastures, while fields were further manured with household refuse brought out of the homestead.

If the fields had been heavily grazed or trampled by animals, ploughing may have been unnecessary. In most cases, however, ploughing was undertaken using the simple iron-shod crook or bow ard (without a mould-board to turn the sod), the effect of which would have been simply to scratch a furrow in the soil (Figures 16.3 and 16.4). The excavation of Celtic field surfaces in southern Britain is now bringing to light evidence of actual ploughing in the form of the bottoms of the individual furrows scored into the bedrock. At Overton Down, Wilts. (Figure 16.3), the remnants of furrows belonging to at

least five ploughings have been examined. Although the pattern is necessarily incomplete, because the ard did not always bite deep enough to scratch the chalk, sufficient survives to show that the individual furrows were about 30 cm apart, and that in all probability the field was ploughed in two directions at right angles, to break up the soil sufficiently for sowing. Very approximate estimates for the work involved in each ploughing can be arrived at by considering an average-sized Celtic field about 64 m square, ploughed by an ard drawn by two oxen travelling at about 3 km an hour. It would take between six and eight hours to complete the area: in other words, a field could be ploughed in a day. The Overton Down field is not necessarily of Iron Age date (it could belong to the Roman period) but there is little doubt that the practices recognized there are exactly comparable to the pre-Roman situation. Indeed, evidence is now accumulating from various parts of the country to show that this basic system of arable production dates back to the second and third millennia BC, and probably remained little changed until the end of the Roman period.

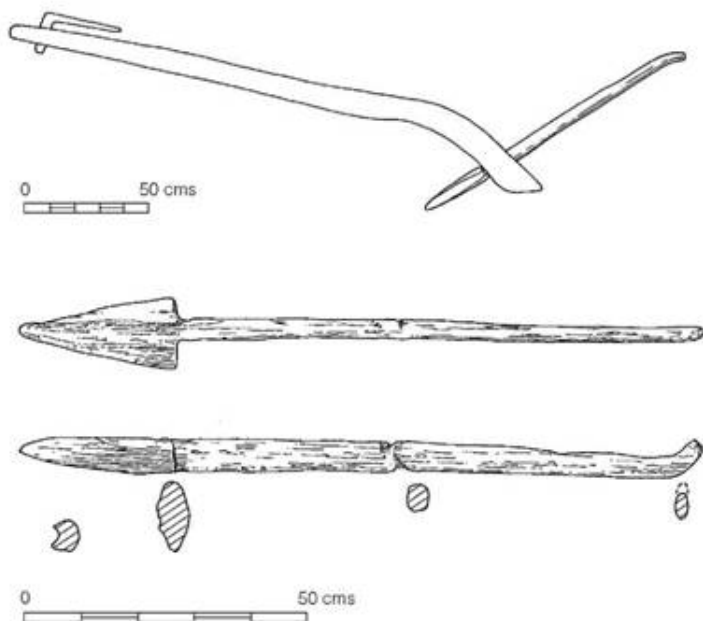


Figure 16.4 *Plough head and stilt from Milton Loch Crannog, Dumfries and Galloway Region (source: C.M. Piggott 1955).*

In addition to using the ard for cultivation, hand-digging with a wooden spade was undertaken. At the second-millennium site at

Gwithian, Cornwall, individual spade-marks were found in the headland of the ploughed fields. In northern Britain, between the Tyne and the Forth, extensive cultivation plots have been identified in upland areas composed of parallel banks of soil between linear ditches – a system that has been called cord-rig (Topping 1989a and b). It is possible, but by no means proven, that the banks were originally created with the spade. Some examples show ard marks on the surfaces beneath but these could have been caused during the use of the strips rather than the construction.

Frequently cultivated Iron Age fields, where they can be defined on hill-slopes, are usually squarish in shape and bounded by lynchet banks created largely by the process of ploughing, which encouraged particles of soil to move down the slope to form a positive lynchet, at the lower edge of ploughing, leaving a negative lynchet at the upper edge. That the lynchets formed at all implies the continuous ploughing of defined areas over a period of many years. Little is yet known about the mechanism of primary land division, but fences, hedges, marking stones or posts, and gullies or setting-out banks were all used to define the original limits of the fields. After the first ploughing or two the land was probably cleared of large stones and flints, which would have been thrown to the edges of the fields thus adding to the permanence of the boundaries. As ploughing continued, lynchets increased in size until gradually the stage was reached when the uncultivated slopes of the banks themselves would have been extensive enough to be used as strips of waste between arable plots. As a general rule, therefore, it may be said that as arable farming developed within a given area of hill slopes, the actual arable hectareage must have decreased with the growth of lynchet slopes. If the thick soil of the lynchets was allowed to support the scrub and woodland which would tend to grow naturally, the areas of potential pannage and forage for pigs and cattle would have gradually increased. Such swathes of scrub would also have served as valuable wind-breaks and, if properly coppiced, would have provided a continuous supply of timber for wattlework and other purposes much as the bocage of northwestern France still does today.

On the low-lying gravel soils fields were bounded by ditches and presumably hedges. In areas such as this constant ploughing would not have led to the formation of lynchets: in consequence the only archaeological traces to survive are buried ditches, which are frequently recorded on aerial photographs. In upland areas stones cleared off the arable plots were frequently piled into mounds or low ridges to form clearance cairns.

The colonization of wasteland was systematic in many areas. The fields around the Farley Mount settlement have a distinctly well-

planned regularity about them, and around the hillfort of Sidbury, Wilts., hundreds of hectares of ordered field systems are known, pre-dating linear earthworks linked to the fort. It is difficult to resist the assumption that at times during the first millennium massive and concentrated programmes of land clearance and distribution were undertaken.

Animal domesticates and their management

Arable farming on the scale outlined above could not have been maintained without considerable flocks and herds to provide manure for the fields. Cattle and sheep were reared in large numbers while pigs played a subsidiary role (Maltby 1996). The cattle were the small Celtic shorthorns (*Bos longifrons*), about the size of modern Dexter cows; the sheep were a small straggly variety, not unlike the modern Soay type. Goats were also kept but it is difficult to distinguish them from sheep on the basis of their skeletal remains. In addition to the three basic farmyard animals, dogs were usually present, probably as pets and work-animals, and small horses or, more correctly, ponies about 12 hands (1.2 m) high, rather like an Exmoor pony, were reared mainly for traction.

Statistics based on the quantities of animal bones found on occupation sites give some idea of the relative importance of the different species, but it must always be remembered that the bones can do no more than represent animals butchered at the homestead and possibly joints of meat brought in from elsewhere. If, for example, sheep were kept solely for wool, their bones would tend to be scarce in such deposits. In broad terms, however, there appears to have been a gradual increase in the numbers of sheep relative to cattle during the first millennium. At the late second- millennium Cranborne Chase sites of South Lodge Camp, Martin Down Camp and the Angle Ditch, the percentage of cattle in the total faunal assemblage varied between 48 and 67 per cent (the lower figure being abnormally depressed by exceptionally large numbers of deer and dogs) while in the second- to first-century BC settlement at Glastonbury sheep outnumber oxen by almost seventeen to one. It is of course possible that the assemblages are affected to some extent by the different functions of the sites or by environment, but the general trend towards sheep- rearing is clear enough. The same story is told by the collection of bones from Eldon's Seat (Encombe), Dorset, where between the seventh and fifth centuries the proportion of sheep increased from 40.7 to 61.7 per cent and cattle correspondingly declined from 50.6 to 28.3 per cent. Figures for the south Midlands are less reliable, but at Twywell and Ravenstone, where statistics are available, sheep outnumbered cattle

by nearly three to one. In the north-east, however, cattle remained dominant in number well into the Late Iron Age.

The relative increase in the numbers of sheep, in the south, throughout the first millennium is probably related to the spread of downland arable. To maintain the enormous hectareages of fields farmed during the Iron Age, flocks and herds would have been essential in providing manure for the land. Sheep would have been the obvious choice, for not only could they survive for long periods on the downs without water, but they were also relatively easy to maintain over the autumn and winter. From September until December they could be turned loose on the stubble without the need for special feeding, and from December until March or April, when the pastures began to grow again, straw fodder carted to the fields would have been sufficient to keep them alive. For the remainder of the year, from April to August, there would have been ample pasture for the flocks to grow fat on in the fields left fallow and on the open downland. The symbiosis between sheep and fertile arable land cannot be overstressed: it is no exaggeration to say that without large flocks, grain production, on the level attained in the south, would have been impossible to maintain.

Sheep also had other uses: at various times they could provide wool and milk, and eventually meat, bone, sinew and skin. Relatively few were slaughtered in the first year – only 9.2 per cent at Encombe and about the same percentage from Hawk's Hill, Surrey – and over 40 per cent of the flock lived to more than 2 years of age at both sites. These figures were not universal, however, for at Barley, Herts., 39 per cent were killed in each of the first two years. One possible explanation is that at Barley the slaughter of yearlings reflects a reliance on sheep as a meat source, the carcasses being salted down for winter, while in the south sheep were kept more for their wool and manure, mutton being of secondary importance. Clearly, there were regional variations in farming practice which need to be worked out in detail when further data become available. In spite of the numerical advantage of sheep, mutton was not consumed in very large quantities compared with beef. The average weight of a sheep was only about 57 kg, while that of a cow might be as much as 410 kg. Thus at Hawk's Hill the sheep at 57 per cent produced only 23 per cent of the meat supply while the cattle at 17 per cent yielded 53 per cent. The figures are of course approximate, but they emphasize the fact that for the most part the Iron Age farmers of the south, in so far as they ate meat, were beef-eaters.

Cattle were far more difficult to maintain than sheep. They needed constant watering and from December until March they would have required protection from the weather in corrals and enclosures, and in

byres in more extreme climates, and provision of regular feeds of straw, hay, leaf fodder or silage. It would seem unlikely that the beasts were brought into the actual farmstead enclosures unless special provision was made to keep them well clear of the domestic fittings and houses. At Little Woodbury, Wilts., no internal divisions are known, but the antennae ditches in front of the main entrance could well have enclosed a stockyard. The advantages in having the stock close by during the winter months are obvious: not only could they be protected from raiders and wild animals, but the constant foddering and watering which would have been necessary could more easily have been carried out from the home farm. Foodstuffs for the cattle would have proved no problem; hay would have been important, so too would leaf fodder cut in the spring and stored throughout the summer. Nor must the significance of straw be overlooked. If, as we have assumed, the harvest was undertaken before the cereals had fully ripened, the straw would have retained a far greater nutritional value. Indeed, this may be one of the reasons for the early harvesting which necessitated drying and roasting before threshing. In some upland areas, where the ripening season was short, barley could have been cut green and stored in the ear with the stalk attached to provide animal feed. Straw and hay may have been stacked on the two-post racks or small four-post standings which occur so frequently. Leaf fodder was probably stored in a similar way or in underground silos. Some of the grass crop may also have been turned into silage, perhaps in pits.

In addition to their value as meat- and milk-producers, cattle were used for many kinds of tractions, in particular ploughing. For these reasons, the tendency was to keep the herd to maturity. Of the thirty-nine individual animals recognized at Hawk's Hill, only three were killed in the range of 0-6 months and sixteen were older than 3 years when they died or were slaughtered. At Eldon's Seat the figures were comparable: of the twenty-eight represented, seventeen had reached maturity. Apart from the plough teams and the bulls kept for breeding, the main herd was probably composed of cows kept in milk during the spring and summer months, when they would have been allowed out to browse in the forest fringes, the pastures and the steep faces of the lynchets. Their very presence implies the provision of water in reasonable quantities, possibly collected and conserved in dew-ponds. No certain traces of Iron Age dew-ponds have been recognized, but their existence on the downs can hardly be doubted. At the settlement on Park Brow, Sussex, a structure suggestive of an ancient dew-pond was found in close relationship to the trackway which joined the various sites and another possibility has been noted in Micheldever Wood, Hants, close to a settlement. If they are indeed

Iron Age in date, their siting would have suited them admirably to the pastoral needs of the community.

Pigs of a domesticated variety played a significant part in the economy. Normally numbers were low: 3.5 and 4.0 per cent in the two periods at Eldon's Seat, 1, 0 and 9 per cent on the Cranborne Chase sites, but rising to 22 per cent at Hawk's Hill and 33 per cent at Highfield, near Salisbury, Wilts. The range is interesting, since it must indicate a considerable variation of practice in the reliance placed on the animal. Settlements close to tracts of woodland on nearby clay soils, in river valleys or on steep hangers, would have been able to maintain large herds of swine without much trouble, but where pannage was sparse, on the more open downs, pig rearing would have been difficult and consequently numbers were much lower.

Horses have been found on most sites but usually only in small numbers around 10 per cent of the total. They are almost invariably mature animals 10–13 hands high and would have been used for traction and riding, though there is evidence of butchery presumably implying that horses were sometimes eaten. The absence of immature animals suggests that horses were not bred but were captured in the wild and trained (Harcourt 1979, 158). At the hillfort of Bury Hill, Hants, the percentage of horse bones was very high, some 27 per cent of the total. This, together with the discovery here of large quantities of horse and vehicle gear, suggests that the training of chariot teams may have been a specialist activity for the brief period of the fort's existence.

Hunting appears to have been of little economic significance. Red deer, roe deer and fallow deer are all recorded on settlement sites, but since shed antlers were collected for tool-making, percentages are unreliable. Various birds are known, including duck, swan, raven, quail, wood pigeon, teal, goose, blackcock and red grouse(?), and occasionally small mammals like water voles and hedgehogs turn up in reliable archaeological contexts; fish are very rarely found. On the coasts, however, shellfish were collected in great quantity.

Dogs were general-purpose animals used for hunting, herding and probably as pets. They occur widely, but little reliable work has yet been carried out on the various breeds represented. At Highfield about twenty dogs were found (22 per cent of the total animal bones), of which five were of foxhound type, one like a retriever and one rather smaller than a fox terrier. Evidently selective breeding was by this time well under way. The large number of dogs from Highfield is puzzling. The site does not appear to have religious connections, which could have accounted for ritual killings, but some of the bones showed knife-cuts possibly resulting from the collection of sinews, which may be thought to indicate some form of industrial activity.

The importance of animal husbandry to the economy was considerable. It is therefore not surprising that specialized structures were designed and built to cope with the problems of looking after the flocks and herds. These will be more appropriately considered in the regional reviews to follow.

Some regional regimes

Sufficient will have been said in the preceding brief overview to show that there was considerable regional variation. This may be due to a number of factors: chronological differences, variation in regional strategies and specialization between contemporary sites within a given region. Not all regions are equally well known but evidence is fast accumulating and some indication of the different subsistence patterns may be sketched out.

Central southern Britain

Central southern Britain is dominated by the chalklands of Wessex which tend to impose a broadly similar set of environmental constraints over much of the region. Standing back from the considerable detail that is now available, various general trends emerge. In terms of the agricultural regime it is possible to recognize an increase in the scale of arable production accompanied by a diversification of crops and a movement into more marginal areas. This may have been occasioned in part by an overall increase in population and by a degree of soil exhaustion on the lighter soils which had been cropped for 2,000 years. Alongside this there is evidence to suggest a dramatic rise in the numbers of sheep in the first half of the first millennium, reaching a high by the fifth century which was maintained for the rest of the millennium. The relative increase in the percentage of sheep does not imply a decline in the actual numbers of cattle: it may simply be that large flocks of sheep were run to maintain the fertility of the thin upland soil which by this time was degenerating.

That a careful balance was kept between cereal growing and stock rearing is axiomatic. The two halves of the regime were entirely interdependent ([Figure 16.5](#)). A field of stubble turned over first to cattle, then to sheep and finally to pigs, in the late summer or early autumn, would have provided nutrients to all three while the land benefited from their manure. Threshing waste was a useful additive to animal feed during the winter, and in the spring, when the majority of the storage pits were opened for seed, the caked crusts of partially fermented grain from around the pit edges would have provided a rich food source for penned beasts at the crucial time in the run up to

lambing and calving.

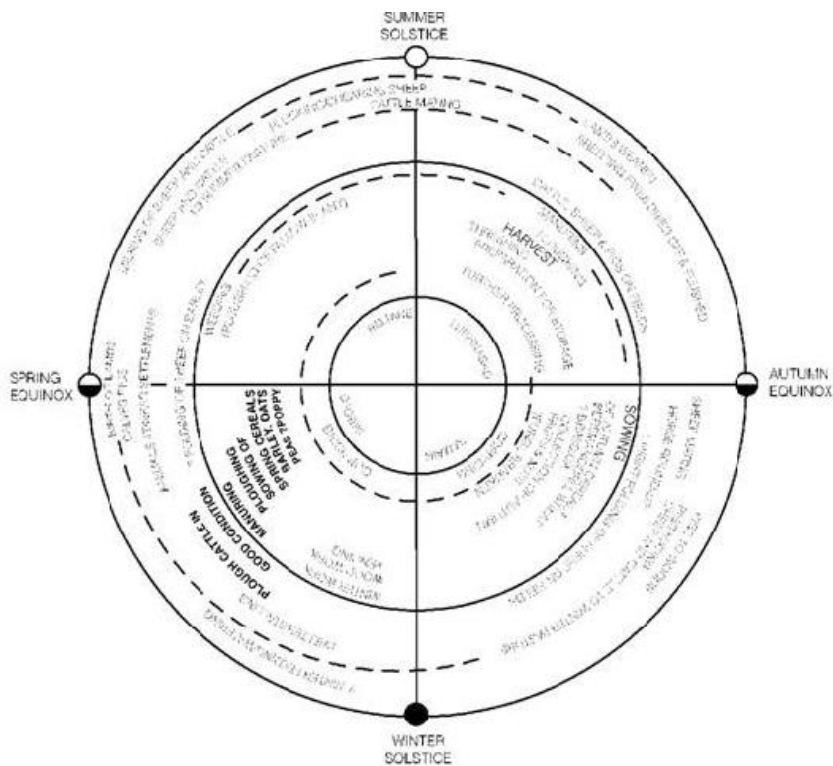


Figure 16.5 *The farming year: a reconstruction based on evidence from settlements in the Danebury region (prepared by Gill Campbell and Julie Hamilton in Cunliffe 2000).*

Each animal would have had its particular uses, but none was more valuable than the pig as a living store of readily accessible fat and protein. The pig could turn virtually any waste into calories: inedible acorns, bracken, grubbed-up roots and all the offal, still births and excess milk generated by husbanding the flocks of sheep and herds of cattle.

It seems highly probable that the basic diet comprised cereals and milk products, with meat as a luxury. Herds of cattle were too valuable to slaughter: they were probably a sign of status and wealth and thus numbers were important. The prime function of the herds was therefore to provide milk and to reproduce. Sheep on the other hand were more expendable. Large numbers were needed to maintain the fertility of the fields, though wool and milk would have been useful by-products. When the herds and flocks needed culling there

was meat to be had, otherwise the only readily available source, having little bearing on other social and economic systems, was the pig. All swine surplus to the needs of the breeding herd could be culled at will. The model proposed is not unlike that prevalent among many peasant societies throughout much of Europe before the Industrial Revolution. For the Iron Age it is plausible but, since the faunal and floral data are impossible to quantify in a way that allows direct comparison, the model cannot be tested.

Sufficient data are now available from the Wessex chalklands to allow a detailed picture to be sketched of the changing economy of the region during the first millennium BC. The totality of the archaeological evidence allows five stages to be defined which may be briefly summarized:

1. *c. 1400-900 BC (Middle-Late Bronze Age)* Land reapportionment: some linear boundaries and coaxial field systems; scattered farmsteads.
2. *900-600 BC (Late Bronze Age-Earliest Iron Age)* Linear earthworks (ranch boundaries): hill-top enclosures, middens, scattered farmsteads.
3. *600-350 BC (Early Iron Age)* Linear earthworks continue; early hillforts proliferate, scattered farmsteads.
4. *350-100 BC (Middle Iron Age)* Some major linear boundaries maintained; many early hill-forts little used, few developed hillforts maintained, some nucleation at hillforts but some scattered farms continue.
5. *100 BC-AD 50 (Late and Latest Iron Age)* Reordering of landscape; abandonment of many hillforts.

The social and political implications of these changes will be considered in more detail later ([chapter 21](#)). Here we will focus on their implications for the food-producing economies.

The period from c. 1400 to c. 900 saw the extension of arable agriculture over very considerable tracts of landscape. In some areas it is possible to identify major programmes of land allotment which seem to have been carried out as a single programme under a coercive authority such is the order and regularity with which the fields are laid out. Many examples have been identified but among the most impressive is the system close to Quarley Hill where the hill slope has been divided into at least four large strips 200-300 m wide, each subdivided into fields, the total system covering some 90 ha ([Figure 3.10](#)). Others are known at Down Barn, Cholderton ([Figure 16.6](#)), Danebury-New Buildings ([Figure 16.7](#)) and Woolbury (Cunliffe 2000, 149-62). The overall impression given by these projects is that society was working co-operatively to impose a stable agricultural regime on

the landscape and to create a degree of permanence in the form of visible and agreed boundaries.

A number of contemporary settlements have been excavated (above, pp. 43–8). Black Patch, East Sussex, however, provides an insight into the workings of one of these family- or extended family-sized units. Black Patch was an unenclosed settlement composed of several small houses, the occupation of which appears on the evidence of radiocarbon dates to have taken place within the period 1400–900 BC. A thorough analysis of the settlement detritus shows that barley occurred in quantity, but there were also significant quantities of emmer and spelt wheat. Bone preservation was poor but sufficient to show that cattle outnumbered sheep by almost two to one. The economic model proposed by the excavator (Drewett 1982, 392–9) suggests that settlements of this type were largely self-contained but were able to produce a small surplus for redistribution in local networks of exchange. The evidence from elsewhere, in Wessex, is consistent with this picture.

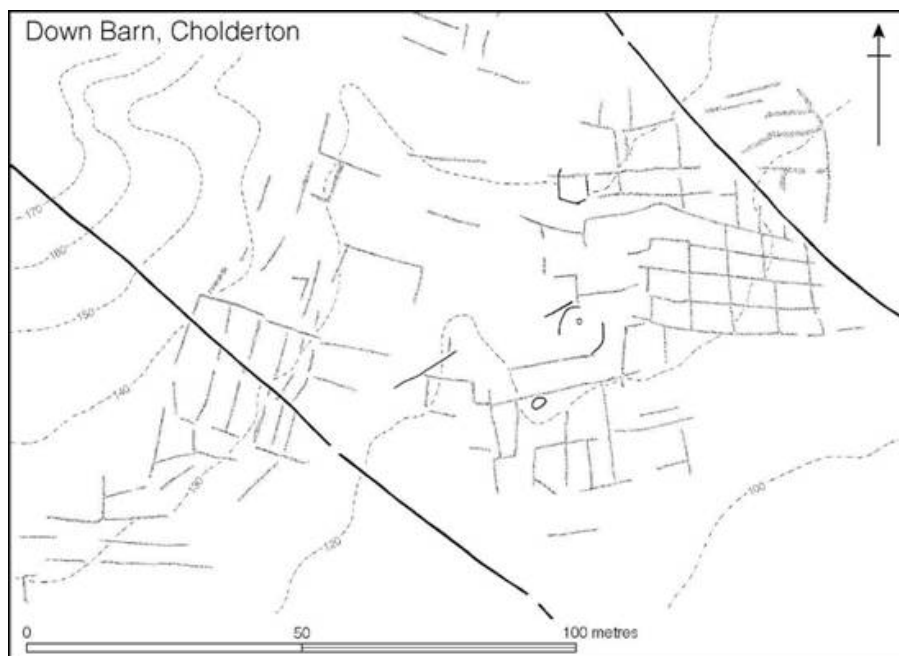


Figure 16.6 Early coaxial field system cut by linear boundaries at Cholderton, Hants (source: Cunliffe 2000).

The second stage in the development of the Wessex landscape (c. 900–600 BC) is characterized by the imposition of an extensive system

of linear earthworks, often called ‘ranch boundaries’, which run for many kilometres across the landscape, frequently cutting indiscriminately across earlier field systems (Figure 16.6) and evidently putting out of use areas previously used for cereal growing. These boundaries often run along ridges, with others branching from them to define large blocks of territory extending from the high downland to the river valleys (Bradley *et al.* 1994; McOmish *et al.* 2002, 56–66). Where sectioned these ranch boundaries usually consist of a V-profile ditch with the spoil thrown on one or both sides, and in some cases, like the Quarley linear, show clear evidence of having been renewed on many occasions. Sometimes, as in the case of the Danebury linear, there were two ditches 3 to 4 m apart. The upcast was probably thrown into the centre and may have formed the basis for a wide hedgerow. Other boundaries are less recognizable. At Portsdown Hill, near Portsmouth, the boundary was a gully flanked by timber palisades. A comparable example was found at Winterbourne Dauntsey, Wilts. Slight features of this kind leave little mark on the present landscape and may well pass unnoticed except when exposed in excavation.

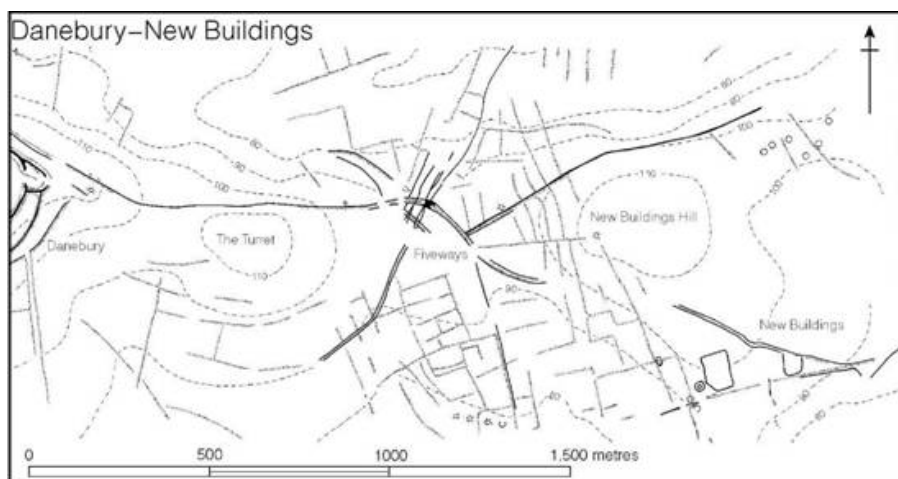


Figure 16.7 The fields, boundaries and enclosures at New Buildings, near Danebury, Hants (source: Cunliffe 2000).

The Wessex linears are particularly well represented in the vicinity of the hillforts of Sidbury, Quarley, Danebury and Woolbury. At Quarley Hill excavation has demonstrated a sequence of development culminating with the superimposition of a hillfort, dating to the fifth century, on part of the system of ditches converging on the hill-top

(Figure 16.8). The main Quarley linear, which runs along the ridge close by, continued to function as a boundary at this time and well into the Middle Iron Age (Cunliffe and Poole 2000g). Similarly at Ladle Hill, Hants, a linear boundary seems to precede the construction of a hillfort which remained unfinished (Figure 16.9). At Danebury, the later hillfort was constructed within an earlier hill-top enclosure which could be shown to be broadly contemporary with a major linear earthwork which was laid out across a pre-existing field system (Figure 16.10). Woolbury hillfort, Hants, can also be shown to be imposed on a linear earthwork (Cunliffe and Poole 2000a) (Figure 16.11) and it is quite probable that the hillfort of Sidbury, Wilts., was constructed at a focus of several linear earthworks. The evidence, then, is impressive in showing that focal points within the systems of linear earthworks were consistently chosen, several hundred years later, as locations for hillforts.

Contemporary with the initial layout of the linear earthworks, a number of hill-top locations were enclosed by an earthwork comprising a bank and ditch. These we have called *early hill-top enclosures* (above, pp. 378–82). Examples include Balksbury, Walbury, Danebury (outer enclosure), Martinsell, Bozedown and Harting Beacon. The most extensively excavated example is Balksbury, Hants. Here the earthworks and simple gate were twice refurbished during the two centuries or so that the site was in use. The interior was largely open apart from a number of small four-post structures, which could have served as fodder ricks, and a few lightly-built circular structures probably serving as shelters for those staying in the enclosure during certain periods in the year. Detailed analysis of the soil accumulation behind the rampart showed that it had derived from manure and cattle litter mixed with debris which had probably resulted from feasting (Ellis and Rawlings 2001, 87–8). Taken together the evidence strongly suggests that the enclosure was built for livestock management, the animals probably being driven there at those times during the year when the flocks and herds needed to be gathered for culling, castration, redistribution and possibly calving and lambing. The hill-top enclosures and linear earthworks clearly belong to a system involving livestock management on a large scale.

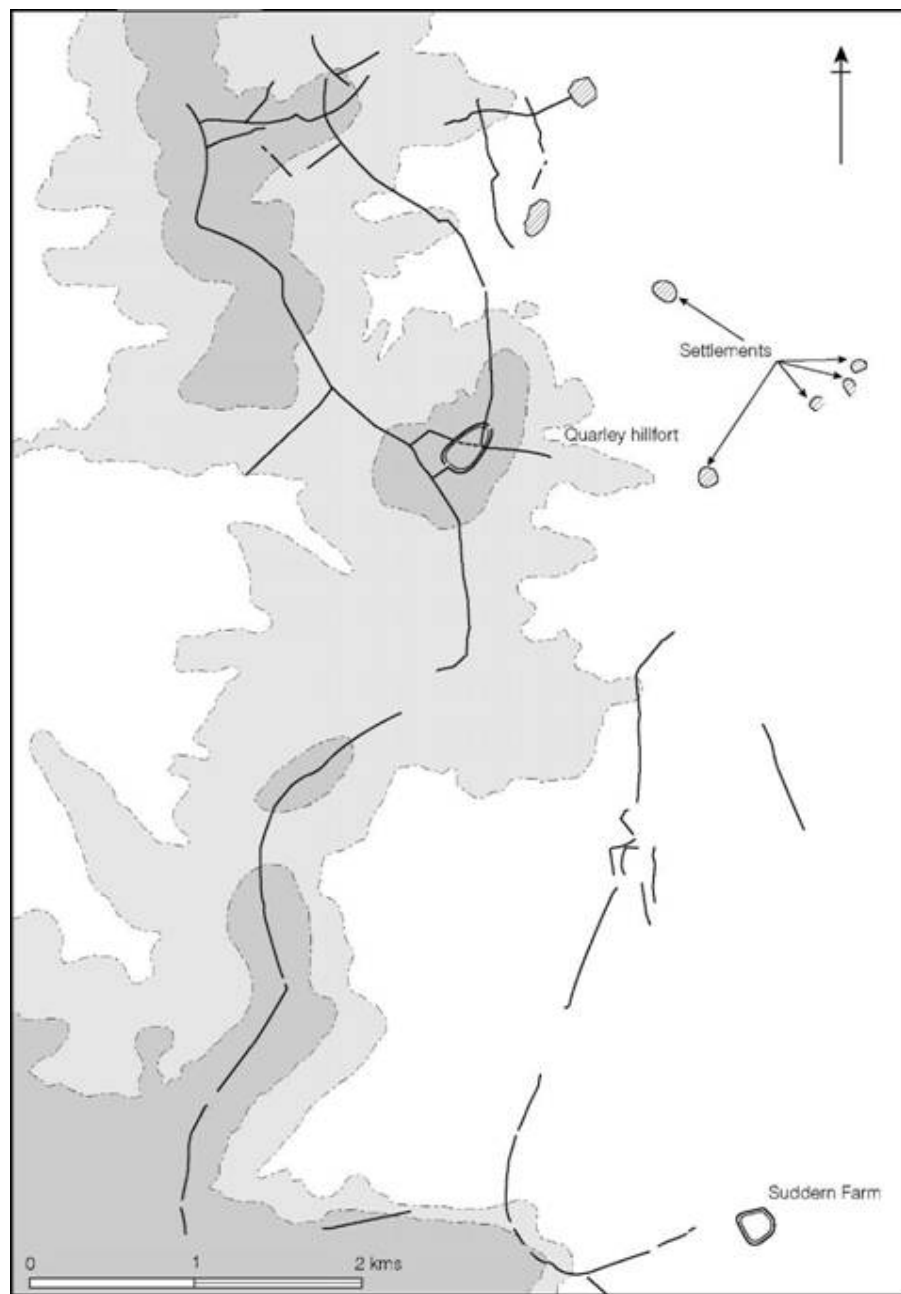


Figure 16.8 Quarley Hill, Hants, and its 'ranch boundaries' (source: author after Palmer 1984).



Figure 16.9 *Rectangular enclosures and associated pasture land on Ladle Hill, Hants (source: S. Piggott 1931).*

Another category of site needs to be considered in this context – locations where huge deposits of midden material were allowed to accumulate. One of these, at Potterne in Wiltshire, covered an area of 3.5 ha and was up to 2 m deep, encompassing some 40,000–50,000 cubic metres of deposit. At East Chisenbury a similar deposit was estimated to be some 65,000 cubic metres. A meticulous analysis of the Potterne midden has led the excavator to conclude that the site was a special location associated with a cattle-rearing society and visited by people on a regular but periodic basis. In other words it may have been a ‘central place’ drawing on a widely dispersed population who gathered at certain occasions during the year when feasting and religious celebrations were enacted (Lawson 2000, 266–71).

A third type of site relevant to the discussion is represented by the small rectangular enclosure on Harrow Hill, Sussex. The enclosure comprised a palisade set in a shallow bank with opposed gated

entrances. Finds were sparse, but pottery of the eighth to sixth centuries was found together with an unusual quantity of ox skulls. The excavators estimated that if the density of bones found in their limited excavation was typical of the enclosure as a whole there must have been at least 1,000 oxen present. That the bones were almost entirely skulls hints at a ritual significance, but an alternative suggestion, not necessarily exclusive of the first, is that the beasts were collected here for slaughter, perhaps in an annual round-up, the carcasses being carried off to neighbouring settlements for consumption.

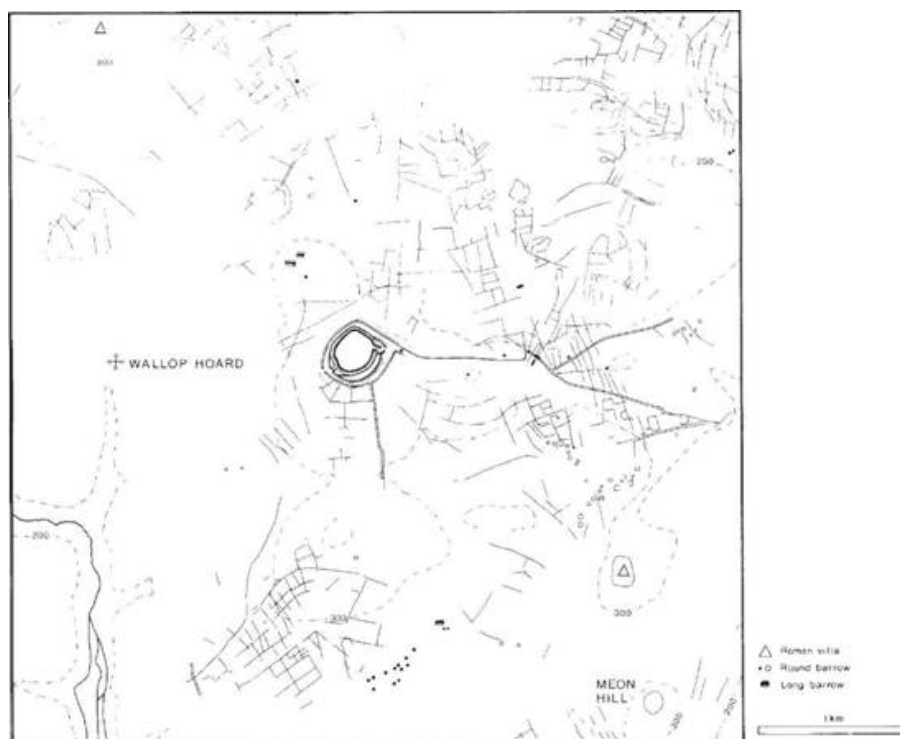


Figure 16.10 *Arable and pasture land around Danebury, Hants (source: Cunliffe 1984a).*

Sufficient will have been said to show that the period 900–600 BC saw the development of animal husbandry organized, it would appear, at a communal level. The animal bone evidence suggests that cattle were the most important resource (at least in terms of body weight) but large flocks of sheep were also managed. The relative importance of cereal growing to the economy is difficult to assess but the probability is that grain formed the principal food source together

with dairy products, meat becoming available when flocks and herds were culled.

The crop remains recovered from Potterne show that wheat and barley were present throughout the occupation in roughly equal quantities and there was evidence for both autumn and spring sowing. The barley was of the hulled six-row type. Of the wheat both emmer and spelt were present. The same range of crops was present at the contemporary farmstead at Houghton Down, Hants, but here spelt was dominant with emmer present in only small quantities.

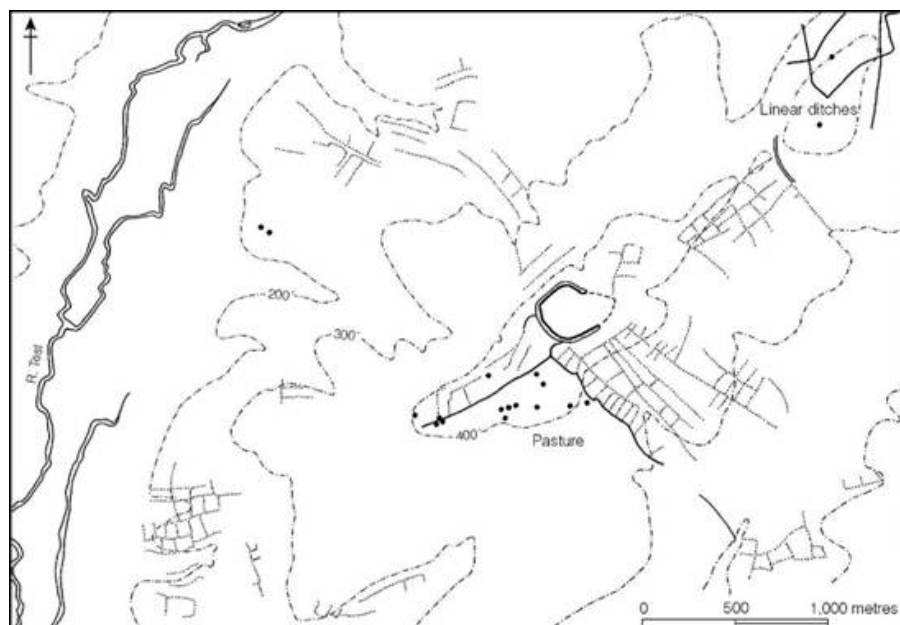


Figure 16.11 *The landscape around Woolbury, Hants (source: author).*

The third stage in the development of the Wessex landscape, 600–350 BC, saw the spread of hillforts (pp. 384–6) and the development of many farmsteads (pp. 239–44), while in the fourth stage, 350–100 BC, a number of hillforts ceased to be used though a few continued. Of these *developed hillforts* several, among them South Cadbury, Barbury, Danebury and Maiden Castle, seem to have become densely occupied and may have provided services for a larger region around. For the purposes of this discussion it is convenient to treat the two stages together, since the economy shows a continuous development over this time, but where necessary to refer to the Early Iron Age (600–350 BC) and the Middle Iron Age (350–100 BC).

If we stand back from the mass of detail available, two broad trends

emerge: a considerable increase in the percentage of sheep represented in the animal bone debris and the sudden appearance of large storage pits and storage buildings as persistent features in settlements and hillforts. If, as we believe, the prime function of the storage pit was to keep the seed corn between harvests and the storage buildings served as granaries for cereals for consumption, the implication would seem to be that there was a dramatic increase in the volume of cereals produced. We have suggested above that the increase in the numbers of sheep may have been related to the expansion in the amount of arable land brought into cultivation, since sheep were the ideal means of manuring upland arable.

The evidence for crop production throughout the period shows a heavy reliance on spelt wheat and six-row hulled barley, with emmer declining into insignificance. A comparison of the residues from settlements excavated in the neighbourhood of Danebury suggests a change in cropping regime over time: in the Early Iron Age a mixed crop of spelt and barley (maslin) was sown in the autumn, but during the Middle Iron Age, although this practice continued, it now seems that crops of pure barley were being sown in the spring (Campbell 2000). How widespread this phenomenon was it is difficult to say. A comparison of grain production and crop processing from two settlements close to each other, at Micheldever Wood and Winnall Down, both in Hampshire, shows that variation between sites might be expected (Monk and Fasham 1980). Such differences could reflect a number of factors ranging from local soil potential to social status.

The position of the hillforts within the socio-economic system is still a matter of debate, not least because very few have been adequately sampled, but from the beginning, in the Early Iron Age, Danebury was occupied on an intensive basis. In addition to streets, numerous houses and a shrine, large numbers of four- and six-post storage buildings and storage pits packed the interior. The potential grain storage capacity was very considerable. Leaving aside the numerous 'granaries', the number of pits per unit area was about four times greater than at the average contemporary farmstead. The implication would seem to be that the hillfort may have provided storage capacity for the surplus grain of the larger community. The various deposits excavated in Danebury produced a varied assemblage of seeds and threshing debris, showing that a full range of processing had been carried out within the fort and that crops had been brought in from several different ecological zones. This supports the suggestion that the fort may have become the territorial focus for processing and storage.

The animal bone assemblage from Danebury in general mirrors that from the neighbouring farmsteads as far as the percentages of the

different species were concerned. Simply counting bones indicates that sheep were the most common, at 60 per cent, followed by cattle at 20 per cent and pig at 15 per cent, with smaller numbers of dog and horse, but in terms of meat yield beef came first, 67 per cent, with mutton and pork being respectively 23 per cent and 10 per cent. However, that meat production was not the prime aim of husbandry is shown by the fact that animals were not killed when at the optimum ages to provide the best meat. Instead the culling of cattle and sheep was geared to the maintenance of large and vigorous herds and flocks. The detailed analysis of the faunal assemblage from Danebury has yielded a great deal of information about Iron Age husbandry (Grant 1984a, 1991), the most significant points, for the present discussion, being those which reflect upon the special use to which the hillfort was put. The high percentage of neonatal deaths among sheep and cattle strongly suggests that lambing and calving were carried out in close proximity to the fort, quite probably in the corrals created by the outer earthworks immediately outside the defences. There would have been much sense in driving the pregnant beasts into the protection of these enclosures at the beginning of the spring breeding season. Labour needed to provide special feed would have been minimized and predators more easily kept at bay. Comparison with chalkland farmsteads is not straightforward because samples are so much smaller and detailed statistics not always readily available, but at the farmsteads in general there were proportionately fewer deaths within the first weeks after birth. If this impression is sustained by further work then it might indicate that hillforts like Danebury served as foci for lambing and calving.

The gross figures of animal bone percentages quoted above are useful as a generalization, but they obscure a far more complex underlying pattern since they conflate some 450 years of occupation during which there were significant changes in the social position of the fort. In the Early Iron Age the fort was occupied by a large community at the same time as a number of farmsteads were in use in the immediate vicinity. In the Middle Iron Age the population within the fort had increased considerably while there was a corresponding abandonment of farms within a 10 km range. The Late Iron Age saw the fort population decline dramatically as people moved back to the countryside. Such changes in status seem to be reflected in the percentages of the different species present. Another factor which may distort the figures is the selection of specific animals as propitiatory offerings placed in pits (below, pp. 570–2). If these are excluded and we consider only bones from general layers then a somewhat different picture emerges:

The Middle Iron Age profile stands out as being far more biased in favour of sheep, with proportionately fewer cattle. There is also a significant increase in horses in the Late Iron Age.

A sheep-based regime would have been far easier to run from the hillfort during the period when the population of the region seems to have lived in the fort. The increase in the number of horses in the latter part of the Iron Age is supported by statistics from other sites. At Bury Hill, Hants, not far from Danebury, the latest phase of occupation, dating to the late second and early first centuries BC, produced an exceptionally large number of horses (27 per cent of the total animal bone assemblage) together with numerous harness- and vehicle-fittings. It is tempting to see this as a reflection of the importance of horse-drawn chariots, the possibility being that the horses were trained and the chariots were built by the inhabitants of the fort. At the settlement site of Gussage All Saints, Dorset, horse remains were also high at between 5 and 10 per cent, and the age profile differed from that of the normal farmyard animals in that new born and young individuals were conspicuously absent. One interpretation of this is to suppose that horses were allowed to breed in the wild on the wastelands and were annually rounded up for selection and subsequent training. The proximity of Gussage to the heathlands of the New Forest is suggestive; so too is the workshop debris representing the mass production of horse gear on the site.

The interrelationship of animal husbandry and crop production is well represented in the field archaeology of the Middle Iron Age. We have already mentioned the linear boundaries of the Later Bronze Age, which seem to have continued as significant landscape features throughout much of the period and the animal pens attached to hillforts. Many of the forts were close to large areas of pasture land which would have provided feed for livestock during the summer months. At the Trundle, Sussex, the pasture lay all around the fort, and was separated from arable land by a series of earthwork boundaries crossing the spurs and so sited that the browsing beasts would always have been within sight, and therefore the protection, of the fort. At Danebury ([Figure 16.10](#)) a large hectareage of pasture visible from the fort lay between a linear earthwork and a block of arable, through which a droveway led to inner corrals around the fort which themselves provided 11 ha of well-protected pasture. A variation of this arrangement can be seen on Stockbridge Down, near Woolbury ([Figure 16.11](#)), where two linear boundaries run up to the fort from the south, defining an area of pasture and dividing it from neighbouring arable fields.

Stock management systems are also well in evidence around farmsteads. The settlement enclosures at Gussage All Saints are intimately bound up with trackways and boundaries running for many kilometres (Wainwright 1979, figure 111), and much the same complex system can be found around many of the settlements on the downlands between the rivers Test and Bourne (Palmer 1984). It was during the Middle Iron Age that a new type of settlement configuration, the banjo enclosure, appeared in central southern Britain (pp. 244–7). The characteristics of the banjo, the long ditched causeway leading from a linear boundary to the enclosure, if divided by temporary fences and hurdles, would have been of considerable value in sorting out stock. The very numbers of these enclosures scattered over Wessex might suggest a reorientation of the economy to more pastoral pursuits. It is difficult to prove on present evidence, but if it were so, such a change could be seen as a response to the progressive impoverishment of the thin downland soil for which there is firm botanical evidence (Jones 1984).

The fifth phase of the Wessex sequence, covering the first century BC and the early first century AD, is not well known, largely because of the paucity of well-published excavations of this period. But there was a marked change in settlement pattern: hillforts generally go out of regular use and enclosed farmsteads give way to agglomerations of ditched enclosure (pp. 248–50), though the banjo type, once established in the Middle Iron Age, continues to be used.

What caused these changes it is difficult to say and indeed there may have been a number of interacting factors. One may have been the progressive degeneration of the traditional farmland, which is thought to have been reflected in the increasingly weedy nature of the crops, and to have led to the opening up of new ecological zones and the introduction of new crops like bread wheat (Jones 1984).

Another factor may have been the development of long-distance trade routes within the Roman world through the port of Hengistbury Head in Dorset. As we will see (pp. 474–83), a lively trade sprang up in the early first century BC. Among the commodities collected there for export was grain which, according to the weeds of cultivation recovered, came from a variety of inland environments. The animal bones indicated an unusually high percentage of cattle, which might have been amassed there either for export on the hoof or to be rendered into leather – a desirable commodity in the Roman market. It is difficult to judge from the archaeological evidence how intensive or how long-lived the trade was, but even a modest level of export over a few consecutive years will have had some effect on the local systems.

The Midlands

Our understanding of the Iron Age economy of the Midlands has been revolutionized by a series of large-scale excavations accompanied by detailed environmental investigation in the Upper Thames valley. Of these Ashville, Barton Court Farm, Appleford, Mount Farm, Mingies Ditch, Roughground Farm, Watkins Farm and Farmoor have been fully published, while Claydon Pike, Hardwick and Gravelly Guy are reported in more summary form. Several general overviews considering the economic implications of these sites have been published (especially Robinson 1984; Hingley and Miles 1984; Jones 1984; Lambrick and Robinson 1988).

A summary of the major settlement types has been given above in [chapter 12](#). Suffice it to say that three broad ecozones can be defined: the upland areas of the Cotswold dip slope; the well- drained gravel terraces of the Thames and its tributaries; and the river flood plain. Each supported its own range of settlement types and each offered a different resource potential for exploitation. Little is yet known of the economy of the dip slope settlements but in general form they resembled the banjo enclosures of Wessex and are most likely to have been single family farmsteads. The valley sites are more diverse, and there is clear evidence of a degree of trans- humance from the gravel terrace settlements to temporary summer establishments on the flood plain so that livestock could range across the hay meadows (Lambrick and Robinson 1979, 1988).

A detailed assessment of the crop waste suggests that a distinction can be made between sites on the well-drained second terrace, such as Ashville and Mount Farm, Oxon., and first-terrace sites like Claydon Pike and Hardwick. The second-terrace assemblages were rich in cereal grain while those of the first terrace were dominated by weeds and chaff. This may suggest that the latter were the production sites where the crops were cleaned and threshed, while the former received the processed grain. If so, then the differences must be either purely functional or are status-led. In either case it suggests a high degree of specialization within a narrow environmental zone and implies a mechanism for redistribution. It may be that special redistribution centres developed within the system: a site like Gravelly Guy, which is characterized by an exceptionally large number of storage pits, has some claim to be such a centre. For settlements on the flood plain, like Mingies Ditch, one must suppose that the grain consumed was grown on the gravel terrace nearby, where it is possible that the community had cultivation plots.

Sheep, cattle, horses and pigs were reared. The percentages of sheep were low compared to the chalkland zone but this is only to be expected. Sheep do not fare well in damp situations: they are prone to

foot-rot and to liver fluke, as the discovery of the molluscan host to liver fluke at Appleford reminds us. Small flocks were however kept. They seem to have been composed largely of mature females, and the scarcity of bones of young animals suggests that the flocks were probably raised on the upland calcareous soils and brought to the drier pastures of the valleys during the summer months. Cattle were better suited to the valley environment and invariably occur in the highest numbers. However at sites like Ashville and Barton Court Farm bones of very young animals are rare. This would seem to imply that, as with sheep, breeding took place elsewhere.

But this may be an oversimplification. A careful analysis of the animal bones from the flood plain site of Mingies Ditch, where cattle, sheep, horses and pigs were found, showed that juveniles were present. Among the cattle, for example, there were peaks of slaughtering at 8 months, with lesser peaks at 18 and 30 months, but the high proportion of old females implies that the herd was kept mainly for milk. Sheep showed a similar pattern with most deaths at 8–9 months and 5 years, suggesting that ram hoggets were killed at the optimum time for meat yield while ewes were kept for wool and breeding. Horse was also important to the economy and may have been as numerous as cattle and only a little less common than sheep. Similar high percentages of horses were also noted on flood plain and first-terrace sites at Farmoor and Appleford but not at the mixed farming site of Ashville on the second terrace. The overall impression, therefore, is that the flood plain and first-terrace sites may have been part of a single interdependent system of production where extensive use was made of the special potential of the flood plain pastures for animal husbandry. The flood plains can be shown to have been carefully managed and heavily utilized throughout the Iron Age (Lambrick and Robinson 1979, 56–60).

There are various possible models to explain the differences between the various sites. The simplest would be to suppose that those on the second terrace in some way provided a redistribution function between the animal-rich economies of the flood plain and first terrace and the corn-rich economies of the Cotswold dip slope. This would be consistent with the evidence we have at present but the reality is likely to have been far more complex.

Whatever the overall system, there are likely to have been a number of settlements specializing in the exploitation of their local environments. One such site, dating to the Early Iron Age, has been excavated at Groundwell Farm, Wilts., located on the richer clayey soils south of the Thames valley. Of the bone assemblage recovered, 30–40 per cent was of pig. It is tempting to see this as an isolated community relying heavily upon the products of its own immediate

territory which would have been dominated by tracts of woodland providing pannage for the swine.

It is not yet possible to provide a detailed view of economic development throughout the first millennium but several generalizations may tentatively be offered. At present few sites of the Middle–Late Bronze Age are known within the region, but from about the eighth century settlements begin to be established on the gravels. By the Middle Iron Age settlement has become prolific, and it is to this period that the developed system, outlined above, belongs. The gravel tracts are now fully utilized and farms have been established on the Cotswold slopes, though these are more widely spaced. The picture is consistent with the view that considerable population expansion was taking place and all ecological niches were being exploited. That said, there is no evidence of settlement hierarchy at this time.

In the Late Iron Age changes can be discerned. New crops such as bread wheat were being introduced, and it seems that the increased alluviation of the river valleys, probably caused by intensive cultivation of the valley sides, was forcing the abandonment of the flood plains. The emergence of long-distance trade networks may well have been responsible for the creation of large enclosed oppida at Salmonsbury, Abingdon and Dyke Hills, commanding major route nodes.

While the Thames valley has so far produced the fullest evidence for Iron Age economic systems in the Midlands much detail has been added by settlement excavation in Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire. Along the valleys of the Ouse and Nene, settlements appear to be densely scattered much as they are in the Thames valley, but few have been examined. Elsewhere, on the varied soils of the Northamptonshire uplands and the flanking clay lands, a number of large-scale excavations have been carried out. The overall picture is one of settlement expansion in the Middle Iron Age filling up the lighter soils and spreading into the heavy clay land (Knight 1984, 266–83).

Evidence for animal husbandry and cereal growing does not differ significantly from that of other regions of the south. There is support for the view that a greater diversity of crops came into use as the Iron Age proceeded. The animal bone assemblages from several sites, e.g. Twywell, Brigstock and Weekley, show that sheep were the most numerous animal, the percentage rising to 76 per cent at Weekley. The prominence of sheep reflects the potential of the calcareous soils of the uplands. Elsewhere, however, at Moulton Park, Bradwell and Bierton where the resource potentials differ, cattle are the more numerous. Differences of this kind are only to be expected in a region where the geology is so varied.

Field systems are not well represented in the region but droveways and linear ditches divide the landscape. Another boundary feature known as a 'pit alignment' is frequently recorded. In the Nene and Ouse valleys 114 pit alignments have been noted, principally as a result of aerial photography (Jackson 1974; Knight 1984, 259–65) and several of these have now been subjected to limited excavation. At Briar Hill Farm the alignment, which was traced for 152 m, consisted of closely spaced sub-rectangular pits averaging 2 m by 1 m and dug to a depth of about 1 m. The pit row had evidently replaced an earlier linear arrangement of small pits or post-holes. The only indication of date consisted of a few sherds of Early Iron Age pottery from the pit fillings. Better dating evidence was obtained at Gretton, Northants, where 114 m of an alignment was carefully examined. Early Iron Age pottery was found in the pits and the filling of one was overlapped by a hoard of currency bars probably dating to the first century BC. There can therefore be no doubt that the pits were of Iron Age date.

While it is clear that pit alignments in some way served to divide land, the physical form of the boundary remains in doubt. It is possible that the spoil was piled between the pits or in a continuous bank along one side, but if this is what was intended it would surely have been more efficient to dig a linear ditch. A more likely explanation, therefore, is that pit alignments were designed to mark the limit of a territory but not to inhibit movement across the line. The phenomenon is particularly interesting and deserves careful attention, not least in the relationship of alignments to other boundary features and to occupation sites.

East Anglia and the Fens

Although several surveys of East Anglia and the Fens have been published (Davies 1996; Davies and Williamson 1999; Hall and Coles 1994) comparatively little is known of the food-producing economy of this large tract of countryside. It is, however, clear that the area experienced an expansion of population in the Middle Iron Age, with areas of heavy land coming under cultivation for the first time. The cultivated crops recorded include emmer, spelt, six-row hulled barley and wild or cultivated oats, and the usual range of domesticated animals are present, but samples are too small to allow detailed comparisons to be offered. At Fison Way, Thetford, Norfolk, however, there is evidence that emmer was stored as spikelets along with barley grain. The absence of processing waste at the site suggests that it may have been a 'consumer site' supplied with grain from producer farms sited on better agricultural land. One such site was sampled at Staunch Meadow, Brandon, where the assemblages were dominated by weed seeds derived from the cleaning process (Wiltshire and

Murphy 1999, 153).

Several fen-edge sites have been examined, most notably Fengate, Haddenham and Wardy Hill, Coveney. All, while producing evidence of the normal domesticates and cultivates, showed a well-developed hunting and collecting strategy making particular use of the fenland environment. At Haddenham the animal assemblage was dominated by sheep, cattle and pig but included beaver and swan in some numbers as well as Dalmatian pelican, crane, heron, mallard, coot and curlew. At Fengate nineteen species of bird were identified together with an extensive range of plants, some of which – opium poppy, celery, mustard, parsnip and thyme – may have been deliberately cultivated. The rich wetland resource will have enabled those controlling it to supplement and to vary their diet to an enviable extent but it is unlikely that these foodstuffs were ‘exported’, though beaver fur, feathers and down may have been produced in surplus for exchange.

The south-west of Britain

While the settlement pattern of south-western Britain is comparatively well understood and the broad outlines of the environmental changes experienced by the moorland massifs can be charted from pollen sequences, very little direct evidence can be brought to bear on the basic questions of crops and herds. The reasons are twofold – flotation has not until recently been used to extract crop-processing debris and the soils are, for the most part, too acid for bones to be preserved.

It is clear, however, that the majority of the settlements relied on a mixed farming regime. Querns and spindle whorls attest to the grinding of grain and to spinning, while stone-walled field systems, largely undated, abound. The provision of outer corrals to a number of the more massively defended settlements (the hill-slope forts or multiple-ditched enclosures) is an indication of the importance of animal husbandry at sites which might be regarded as high status.

At the Cornish multiple-enclosure fort of Killibury, where flotation was carried out, emmer, spelt and oats were identified, while from Goldherring, barley, oats and rye were recovered. In both cases the samples were too small to allow the relative importance of the cereal types to be demonstrated.

A systematically collected assemblage of animal bones from the coastal site of Mount Batten presents a somewhat unusual picture. In the earliest, Late Bronze Age, phase sheep were the most numerous, followed by cattle and then pigs, but the much larger Iron Age group showed that cattle were by now the most important, followed by pig and then sheep. The age at death of the various species implied that

while cattle and pig were reared primarily for meat (they were killed as juveniles or young adults), sheep lived until they were mature and were therefore presumably kept to provide wool (Grant 1988). This pattern is in marked contrast to the normal husbandry pattern of the south, where meat production was a secondary consideration. It is difficult to assess the Mount Batten evidence since there is nothing with which to compare it locally. While it could be typical of a south-western regime it is more likely either that the site was of high status or that meat was being processed for export.

A further insight into the localized nature of the south-western economies is provided by a series of rescue excavations in east Devon along the line of the A30 between Honiton and Exeter (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 1999). Here the agricultural region was dependent upon a variety of crops including emmer, spelt, bread wheat, barley, celtic beans, peas and flax. The persistence of emmer is in contrast to the cropping pattern in Wessex, where, by this time, spelt had replaced emmer. A study of the processing waste suggests that crops were harvested by cutting low down with a sickle and also by uprooting, and the harvest was stored in sheaves or as threshed and winnowed grain with minimal processing. Sieving and cleaning took place as and when the grain was needed for consumption. The overall impression given by this evidence is of production at household level with little sign of complex patterns of organized redistribution.

A totally different pattern of subsistence is evident from the rich remains recovered from the excavation of the 'lake villages' of Glastonbury and Meare, both of which commanded a very wide variety of rich resources including large tracts of wetlands. The crops grown on the drier lands around included wheat, barley, oats and celtic beans and peas, while animal husbandry was dominated by sheep, with smaller herds of cattle and some pig rearing. In addition to these Iron Age staples wild fowl and fish were to be had in plenty. At Glastonbury over thirty species of birds were identified, including mallard, teal, widgeon, tufted duck, coot, moorhen, crane, heron, partridge and grouse, while at Meare bones of eel, salmon, roach, cod and bass have been found. Other wild animals such as red and roe deer and wild boar were hunted for food, while otter, beaver, fox, wild cat, weasel, marten and polecat provided furs. The richness of the assemblage is in part the result of the unusually varied environment, but it is a reminder of the very extensive use which Iron Age communities would have made of the varied natural resources of their territories. Those able to exploit the wetlands of Somerset would have been able to acquire resources, like furs, which would have been of special value in the networks of exchange with communities on the drier chalklands to the east.

From this brief sketch it is evident that the patchwork of different environments within the landscape of the south-west will have created a variety of different subsistence strategies each maximizing on local resources. Although much more evidence is required it should eventually be possible to model in some fine detail the flow of surpluses throughout the networks that bound the communities of the region. The potential which the region offers for understanding socioeconomic interactions is considerable.

Wales

Our knowledge of the food-producing economy of Wales in the Iron Age is patchy, but as a broad generalization the Principality can be divided into two zones: a mountainous central zone most suited to pastoral activities and a northern and southern periphery where climate and soils combine to create conditions conducive to mixed farming. The map of farming regions in Wales in the Tudor period (Figure 16.12) encapsulates the dichotomy.

As we have seen in the discussion in [chapter 13](#), concerted programmes of fieldwork and excavation in the southern peripheral zone, most particularly in Dyfed, have greatly advanced our understanding of settlement type and social interactions (most conveniently summarized in Williams 1988). Three distinct socio-economic regions have been proposed: a Coastal SouthWest area, an Inland South-West area and an Upland North and East area (Figure 16.13). This zoning neatly contains the settlement variations and is supported by what little direct evidence there is for food-producing systems.

The Inland South-West Zone is characterized by small defended enclosures less than 1.2 ha in extent. The economy was probably mixed. Arable activities are attested by iron plough tips from Walesland Rath and querns from several settlements. Traces of pre-rampart ploughing are recorded at Woodborn Rath and Drim and cereal pollen has been identified from below the rampart at Merryborough. Charred grain has also been recovered from Woodside. It may also be that some of the four-post storage structures found at a number of sites served as grain stores. However at Pen y Coed, where querns and four-post structures were found, the well-preserved environmental evidence showed that the homestead was surrounded by an essentially pastoral landscape. The implication, therefore, is that while some of the settlements may have been directly involved in cereal production, others may have been receivers of processed cereals redistributed through a regional or interregional socio-economic system (Williams 1988). The nature of animal husbandry within the zone depends upon the analysis of very few bone assemblages. At

Coygan Camp cattle predominated (64 per cent), with sheep and pig coming a poor second at 16 per cent and 15 per cent respectively. This emphasis on cattle is not surprising given the extent of the rich pastures of south-west Wales.

The Coastal South-West Zone includes six major defended sites in excess of 1.2 ha in area: most are multivallate coastal promontory forts of the type which might be thought to represent centres for the storage and redistribution of surpluses. Within this zone there is clear evidence of arable production. Field systems have been identified on Stackpole Warren, the earliest phase, defined by banks and ditches, producing a radiocarbon date of the fifth to fourth centuries. Terraced fields were also found close to the defended enclosure of Pembry Mountain, from the excavation of which grain was recovered. Emmer and spelt were found in a pre-rampart soil associated with a radiocarbon date of the fourth century, while grain from the vicinity of a four-post structure was largely spelt. The absence of weed seeds and chaff from the deposits implies that both were processed crops. This raises the possibility that the cleaning and threshing occurred elsewhere and the processed grain was brought to the settlement for storage.

The Upland North and East Zone is characterized by defended sites ranging from farmsteads to substantial enclosures, though rarely over 5 ha in extent. An important pollen sequence from Tregaron Bog demonstrates the rapid development of pastoral clearances following the onset of sub-Atlantic conditions in the early first millennium BC (Turner 1964). While the sequence provides a general indication of regional conditions and supports the idea of a predominantly pastoral economy in which sheep probably played a major role, this does not preclude cereal growing in more favoured micro-environments. The excavation at the defended enclosure of Caer Cadwgan has produced a small quantity of grain, including spelt, barley and possibly emmer and rye. From the same site the small animal bone assemblage suggests that sheep were twice as numerous as cattle.

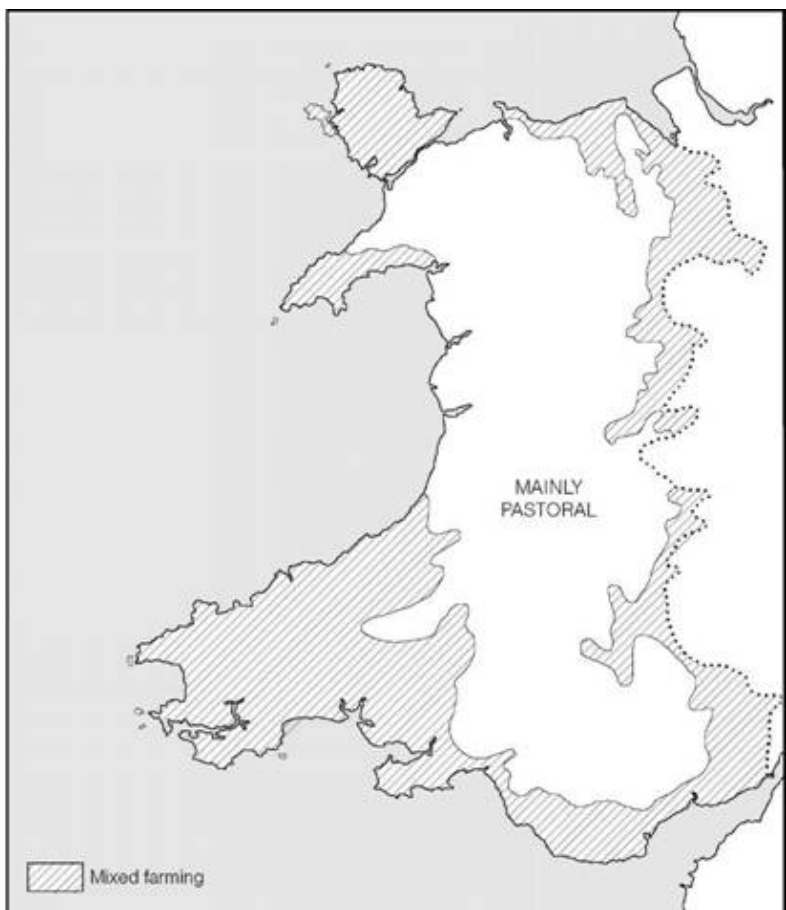


Figure 16.12 *The farming potential of Wales in the Tudor period (source: Thirsk 1967).*

Over and above the variation in regional economy some general chronological trends emerge, of which the most significant is an apparent increase in population during the Middle Iron Age leading perhaps to an increase in competition. In the Coastal South-West Zone there is some evidence for the increase in size of hillforts which could be taken to imply a greater degree of centralization in production and redistribution (Williams 1988, 42–3).

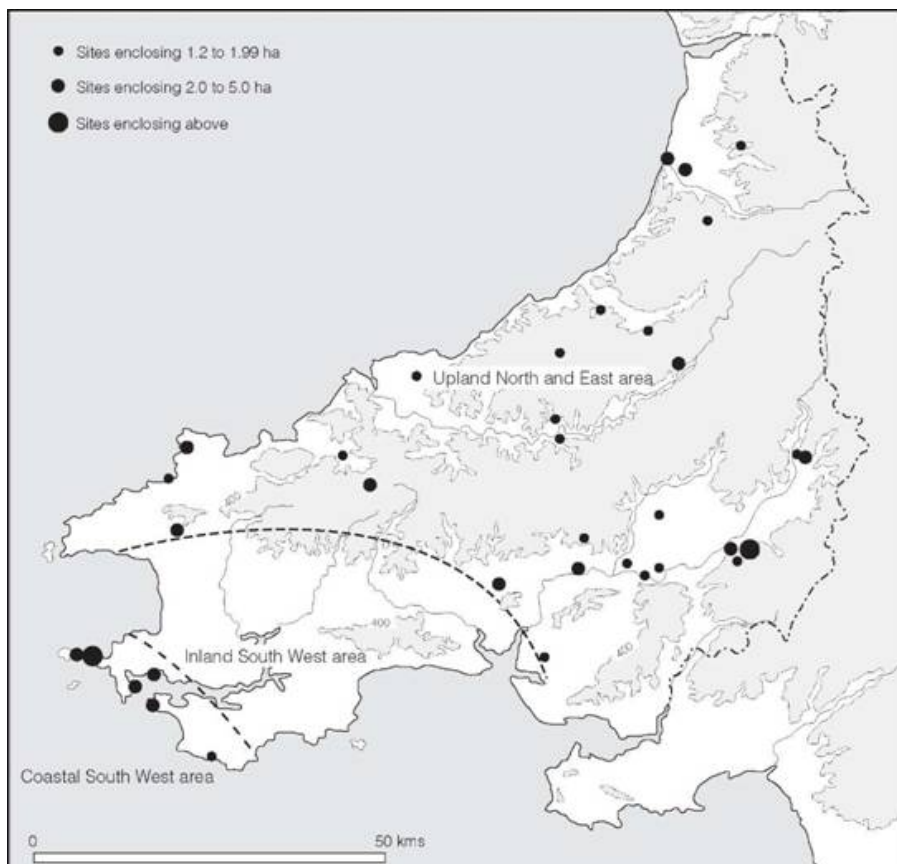


Figure 16.13 *Economic zones in south-west Wales in the Iron Age (source: G. Williams 1988).*

The detailed model which is beginning to emerge as the result of carefully thought out research programmes in south-west Wales provides an indication of what might be achieved in other parts of the Principality where the evidence is at present too sparse to allow patterns of production to be discerned.

In the south-east periphery, from the Gower to the river Wye, the settlement pattern has more in common with central southern Britain than with south-west Wales. Large hillforts dominate a landscape scattered with small enclosed farmsteads, several of which can be shown to continue in use well into the Roman period. The environment is one conducive to mixed farming, and it may well be that here, as in Wessex, the hillforts provided central services including mechanisms for storage and distribution. Quantifiable economic data are at present lacking.

In north Wales the Llyn peninsula, the fertile Vale of Clwyd and

the comparatively narrow coastal plain between were densely settled. There is yet little evidence bearing on the economy of the region. At Dinorben sheep were numerically more common than cattle but exact percentages are not recorded in detail. The implication is that at first the sheep-runs of the mountains were more widely used than the pastures of the Clwyd valley. By the Roman era the emphasis had been reversed. Sheep may have been of importance in the pre-Roman period in other parts of the region, for the mountainous landscape would have been conducive to their rearing. Herein may lie one of the reasons why the multiple-enclosure forts of the south-west are rare in the north, for sheep would not have required the same corralling facilities as cattle. It may also be relevant that spindle whorls, reflecting the importance of wool, are more commonly found on the occupation sites of the north.

The significance of grain production to the economy is difficult to assess, but saddle querns were common at Dinorben, Castell Odo and Conway Mountain, although at other sites they were absent. That the region possessed a fine grain-growing potential was shown by extensive development of arable farming under Roman domination. It may well be that large-scale cultivation began a few centuries earlier.

The occurrence of large hillforts in some parts of the region suggests a centralization uncommon in the predominantly pastoral areas of the south-west. It is possible, however, that they represent the kind of complex social organization which was potentially possible in a community practising mixed farming based on grain growing and sheep rearing – an economy closely similar to that of south-eastern Britain. If so, the occurrence of hillforts is not surprising. Hogg (1966) put forward the suggestion that the hillforts were permanently occupied, on the grounds that the houses within were substantially built and no houses have been found in the surrounding lowlands. Nevertheless, the possibility remains that they were used only as the summer refuge of people following a transhumant way of life, their winter farms being sited on the rather more hospitable lowlands (Alcock 1965). The virtual absence of lowland farms may be more apparent than real, for many of the Roman period homesteads might well have been in use before the Conquest; the fact that no distinctive pre-Roman artefacts have been found may only reflect the widespread dearth of the surviving elements of the pre-Roman material culture. That trans-humance was practised to some degree seems likely, but there are difficulties in accepting the hillforts as positive evidence for it. Migration to upland summer pastures might tend to disperse rather than nucleate population, although it could of course be argued that raiding was more prevalent in the summer months, making communal defence necessary. At present, it must be admitted that the problems

are rather too many to allow firm conclusions to be reached: more statistical evidence is required of the composition and age range of the flocks and herds from various sites. Sadly, these kinds of data have seldom been published in the past.

Fieldwork and limited excavation on Anglesey and the adjacent strip of mainland show a variety of settlement types, including permanently occupied farmsteads set in rectangular enclosures occupying good farming land. One of these, Bryn Eryr, has been thoroughly excavated and now serves as a type-site (above, pp. 299–301). It was set in a landscape cleared of forest and dominated by pasture land and arable fields. Both emmer and spelt wheat were cultivated during the Iron Age, and the presence of ‘granaries’ and quernstones within the settlement bears witness to storage and processing at the homestead. It was not until the Roman period that emmer was replaced by spelt and bread wheat, though by this time wheat production was secondary to barley and oats. Animal bones are not well preserved but sheep and cattle were reared primarily for milk and wool. The economy seems to have been self-contained within the farming landscape surrounding the farmstead.

Finally we must consider the Welsh borderland, the wide strip of hilly country lying between the plain of the river Severn and the mountainous interior of Wales. The settlement pattern of this zone is tolerably well known and many of the hillforts which dominate it have been excavated, some of them on a considerable scale. Smaller settlements, however, are ill known except for the excavated site of Collfryn and where they survive as earthworks in the upper reaches of the Severn valley and the foothills of the Berwyn Mountains. The available environmental evidence is therefore biased heavily towards hillforts and gives a somewhat one-sided picture.

There can be little doubt that over much of the region mixed farming was practised. Many of the excavated hillforts, e.g. Credenhill, Midsummer Hill, Croft Ambrey, the Wrekin and Breiddin, have produced ample evidence of concentrations of large four- and six-post storage structures, querns are not at all uncommon, and cereal grain has been found in most of the forts excavated under modern conditions. Wheat, of unspecified type, comes from Croft Ambrey, Caynham Camp, Midsummer Hill and Wrekin while Breiddin has produced emmer wheat. Midsummer Hill and Wrekin have also yielded barley and *bromus* spp. Good arable land is to be found in the general proximity of all the forts.

Direct evidence for husbandry has to rely largely on the assemblage from Croft Ambrey. The animal bones show that sheep were the most numerous but cattle and pig occurred in some number. There is also some evidence that horse meat was eaten and freshwater mussels were

collected. That many of the animals were mature when killed suggests that flocks and herds were kept more for their meat and wool, and no doubt as a measure of status, than for their meat. The production of woollen fabric is further emphasized by the discovery of spindle whorls and loom weights. A similar picture can be reconstructed for the hillfort of Sutton Walls, Heref. and Worcs., but here there seems to have been a slight numerical predominance of cattle over sheep. A weaving comb and several loom weights are added evidence of wool production.

The significance of stock rearing to the economy is shown by the provision of annexes to several of the forts. Croft Ambrey offers an example of a simple annex attached to one side of the fort enclosing about 2.8 ha – an area equivalent to that of the main camp. A more complex pattern occurs at Old Oswestry, Salop ([Figure 16.14](#)), where in a late period subdivided enclosures were added on either side of the main entrance; these were later contained within a bank and ditch which enclosed the entire fort and protected a considerable hectareage well suited to the control of livestock. The divided enclosures are more difficult to explain in their present form, but had suitable provision been made for an entrance they might have served as stock-pens. Further north at Earls Hill, Salop, and Breiddin multiple enclosures are also found.

The farmstead of Collfryn, Powys, provides some evidence of the economy of a family unit. Various grain crops were grown including emmer and spelt wheat, barley and oats, which, together with weeds of cultivation, indicate autumn sowing. Wheat was the predominant crop and the evidence for threshing and dehusking suggests that the crops were processed within the enclosure and were stored in post-built granaries. Animal bones were not well preserved, but sheep were the most numerous with cattle and pig also represented in significant number. Thus the farmstead seems to have been self-sufficient, utilizing its immediate environment to the full.

The evidence is too coarse-grained at present to allow for detailed models to be offered or for chronological or regional variation to be defined, but the considerable variation in environment within the borderland would strongly suggest that many local economic strategies existed. The differences in the animal bone assemblages between Croft Ambrey and Sutton Walls could reflect the upland nature of the former, well suited to sheep, and the location of the latter on the edge of the valley of the river Lugg where well-watered meadow was to be had in plenty. Many of the settlements on the western extremity of the borderland, fringing the Welsh mountains, might well have utilized the mountainous pastures in a transhumant system. Evidence of these subtleties at present eludes us. Nor is it clear

precisely how the hillforts and settlements related together in a single socio-economic system. Apart from the rarity of storage pits in the borderland forts there is little to distinguish them from the hillforts of Wessex. It may well be therefore that the socio-economic systems of the two regions were not significantly dissimilar, with some of the hillforts providing storage and redistribution facilities for the larger community, the majority of whom lived in the small enclosed farmsteads in the vicinity.

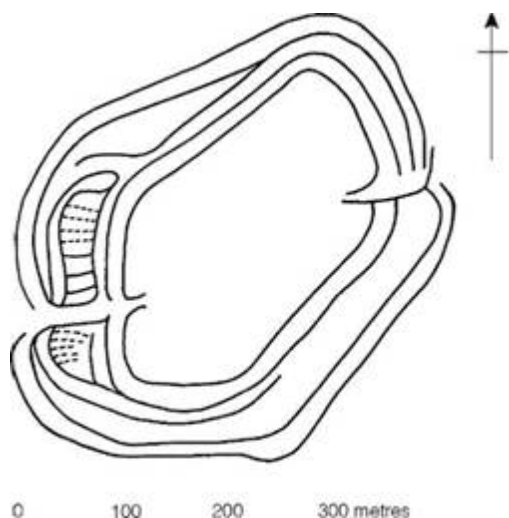


Figure 16.14 Old Oswestry, Salop. A hillfort with outer corrals (source: Varley 1950b).

Central and northern Britain

Our knowledge of the economy of northern Britain has changed dramatically in recent years. The simple ‘pastoral’ model put forward by Piggott (1958) can be shown to be no longer valid, but we are still far from appreciating the full range of subsistence strategies which the varied bio- climatic sub-zones of the north called for. At a level of gross simplification, the pollen evidence suggests a progressive opening up of the forest cover during the first millennium (Turner 1979; Wilson 1983; Simmons 1995; Dumayne-Peaty 1998) while the distribution of artefacts such as quernstones and spindle whorls is a reflection of a mixed economy. Settlement location and morphology, with examples of fields and paddocks, add a further dimension, but direct evidence of crops and herds from which valid assessments can be made is still all too rare, though a wide- ranging review of crop husbandry regimes in the north has done much to clarify the situation

(van der Veen 1992). Against this we must constantly bear in mind the variables created by soil type and altitude.

For the purpose of this brief overview we may consider two well-studied regions: the northeast from the Humber to the Tyne; and the further north-east from the Tyne to the Forth.

The Humber–Tyne region has produced an impressive range of new data since Piggott wrote in 1958, much of which has been brought together in valuable reassessments by Haselgrove (1984a) and by van der Veen (1992). The area is dominated by upland regions such as the Wolds and North York Moors and the Pennines, interspersed with wide clay vales and areas of undulating boulder clay: the potential for varied economic strategies is considerable.

Early first-millennium land divisions on the Wolds (Ramm 1978) and the North York Moors (Spratt 1982) have been interpreted, not unreasonably, as evidence of large-scale reorganization of upland pastures by communities occupying the valleys or the interface between the upland zone and the more productive heavier soils of the lowlands. The arrangement is not at all unlike that created by the linear earthworks of Wessex, which is thought to have been laid out at about the same time. Upland pastures of this kind and those of the Pennines would have provided ideal runs for flocks of sheep, the relative importance of which is reflected in the quantity of spinning and weaving equipment found on the Pennine sites and by comparatively high percentages of sheep identified at sites like Garton, Rudston and Staple Howe. Elsewhere, however, where well-watered pastures were near at hand, cattle predominated as at Stanwick, Thorpe Thewles, Levisham, Burradon, Coxhoe and Catcote (Haselgrove 1984a, 18).

The most complete evidence for a food-producing system comes from Thorpe Thewles, Cleveland, where cereal growing was well represented by crop and processing residues. The main crops were spelt and six-row hulled barley, with only very small quantities of emmer. Oats were also present but may have been of the wild variety. Analysis of the seeds and processing waste suggested that the crops came from the well-drained fertile soils close to the settlement: the site was self-sufficient but probably did not produce a surplus. Pollen analysis from three separate locations within the vicinity was entirely consistent with the excavated evidence. It showed that large-scale deforestation started in the middle of the second millennium BC when arable farming began, arable production intensifying in the Late Iron Age to early Roman period.

Animal bones were tolerably well preserved, though the sample was not large. Cattle were most numerous, followed by sheep, pig and horse, horse being more common than pig in the Middle Iron Age

phase. Geese and chickens were also recorded. In the earlier period stock management was concerned more with secondary products than with meat, but by the later period a change can be recognized in herding practices, with greater emphasis being placed on the production of beef and hides while there was an accompanying increase in the number of sheep and pigs being kept. The cause of this change is uncertain. It could be that the economy changed from being one geared to exporting prime stock for exchange to one of higher status where quality surplus was consumed. An alternative would be to see the socio-economic structure changing from one in which status was defined by the number of cattle owned to one in which surplus stock was slaughtered to provide meat and hides for local consumption and export. In this context it should be remembered that hides were much in demand by the Roman army and, from the first century BC, were exported from Britain in bulk. The enhanced value which this would have given the product might well have been sufficient to cause readjustments in local economic strategies.

Thorpe Thewles provides a valuable and detailed insight into one food-producing system but we should remember that, while it may be typical of the farmsteads of the Cleveland boulder clays, other ecological zones will have imposed different constraints. Nor should we forget the effect that factors such as climatic change and population growth would have had on local strategies.

A second Iron Age settlement of considerable interest lay beneath the Roman fort of South Shields at the mouth of the Tyne. The earliest phase of settlement associated with cultivation plots dates to the fourth to second centuries and the site was also cultivated again in the Late Iron Age. The rich assemblage of plant remains recovered from the Middle Iron Age settlement showed that spelt wheat and six-row hulled barley were grown as separate crops. The presence of many perennial arable weeds tolerant of low nitrogen levels suggests that the crops were cultivated under an extensive regime which involved limited manuring and soil disturbance. This would be consistent with the evidence found on the site for narrow-rig cultivation which may have been spade- or hoe- dug. Other edible plants included hazelnuts, sloes, rose-hips and blackberries.

A number of other excavations in the Humber–Tyne region, most notably Rock Castle and Catcote (Cleveland), Melsonby and Stanwick (North Yorks.) and Chester Howe (Northumberland), have provided valuable new evidence for understanding the regional economy, building on the pioneering results of Thorpe Thewles and South Shields. It is now evident that mixed farming was the normal subsistence strategy throughout the region. During the Iron Age spelt wheat replaced emmer, while bread wheat appeared at the end of the

Iron Age (van der Veen 1992). The adoption of these innovations in parallel with developments in the south is in marked contrast to the region north of the Tyne, where emmer continued to be grown and traditional small-scale labour-intensive practices persisted.

Between the Tyne and the Forth there is comparatively little direct evidence for food production in the site residues, in spite of the exceptionally high quality of the fieldwork and excavation which have taken place, largely on sites occupying what is now marginal land. But the demonstration that cord-rig cultivation plots are frequently found associated with settlements in the uplands of Northumberland and southern Scotland provides firm evidence for the widespread practice of agriculture in these regions (Topping 1989a and b).

An assessment of the unenclosed sites of Northumberland (Gates 1983) has raised many intriguing issues. Settlements of this kind are frequently found at high altitudes, above 230 m. A number of them can be shown to be associated with clearance cairns and small fields, and at one site, Snear Hill, Northumberland, there is field evidence which could be interpreted as lazy bed cultivation at an altitude of 330 m. The evidence provided by pollen diagrams from Northumberland is somewhat ambiguous (Davies and Turner 1979). Persistent small-scale clearances are indicated but cereal pollen is rare. This however may be explained by the fact that few of the samples have come from close to settlements, and since cereal pollen is not easily wind-borne over large distances, the pollen sequences may not be truly representative of the actual situation. However, pollen of barley has been recorded at over 380 m at Broad Moss in the north Cheviots, and at Hartshill, Northumberland, a settlement dating to between the twelfth and sixth centuries BC, carbonized remains of emmer, barley, oats and flax have been recovered together with a range of weeds typical of cultivated grain. Adjacent to the settlement, 0.6 ha of fields have been identified. Taken together the evidence is sufficient to suggest arable farming at high altitudes in the first half of the first millennium BC.

This is of particular interest in the light of the evidence for climatic deterioration thought to have taken place between 1200 and 500 BC (see above, pp. 33–4). At first sight a plausible scenario would be to suppose that these high-altitude settlements were progressively abandoned as the climate worsened, forcing settlers down to lower altitudes, but this was not invariably the case. In the vicinity of Alnham, in the Cheviots, six unenclosed settlements were recorded between 270 and 380 m, but in the same area there were six palisaded settlements and two hillforts. Although no direct dating evidence exists for this group of settlements, palisaded enclosures were generally (but not invariably) later than open settlements, though

there is a considerable degree of overlap in dates, while hillforts usually succeeded palisaded settlements. The implication of the Alnham settlement pattern is, therefore, that occupation continued at high altitude throughout the height of the climatic deterioration. However, the emergence of palisaded enclosures, located with an eye to defence rather than choosing the best agricultural land, might hint at a change to a more pastoral economy in what must have been, by then, marginal areas (Gates 1983, 118–19).

The evidence for the whole of this north-east region is biased towards settlement in marginal regions. This does not mean that the richer lowland soils were sparsely occupied but simply that more recent land use has obscured most of the detail.

Further north, across the border in Scotland, a variety of earthwork features, including patches of cord-rig agriculture, point to settled agriculture (Halliday 1982; Topping 1989a and b), while the occurrence of linear ditches and enclosures is a reminder of the importance of herding. Evidence of cereal-growing may also be deduced from large numbers of quernstones found on sites like Dryburn Bridge, E. Lothian, but crop processing waste has not yet been recovered from the region. The discovery of hulled barley and bread wheat at Rispsain Camp, Whithorn, Galloway, is, however, an indication of what might be expected. Further evidence comes from pollen samples taken from bogs near the Antonine Wall. It indicates that extensive and rapid forest clearance was under way around 300 BC and shows that the clearances are associated with an increase in pollen associated with arable cultivation (Dumayne-Peaty 1998).

Evidence for animal husbandry is ill-defined but bones have been recovered and the comparatively large assemblage from Broxmouth offers hope of elucidating the economic strategy of the site (Barnetson 1982). The care of animals throughout the winter in these northern latitudes would almost certainly have required undercover shelter. The possibility that ring-ditch houses, frequently found in the region, served as animal byres has much to commend it (Reynolds 1982, 53–4).

North-western Scotland and the Islands

The exposed north-western part of Scotland together with the Western and Northern Isles presented a largely treeless landscape subject to extremes of climate, but the indented rocky coastlines offered an environment rich in fish and shellfish as well as the products of stranding, which more than compensated for the uncertainties of husbandry and cereal-growing. Among the most important sites providing a range of useful data one might list Dun Mor Vaul on Tiree (Argyll.), Dun Vulcan, South Uist, Sollas, North Uist,

Crosskirk Broch, Caithness, Bu Broch and Howe, Orkney, and Scalloway, Shetland.

From the evidence of these and other sites certain generalizations can be made, but it should be remembered that each site has its own special characteristics. Crop production was based almost entirely on the cultivation of barley, usually, where it can be identified, the six-row hulled variety which dominated the assemblages at Dun Mor Vul, Dun Vulcan and Scalloway, or less frequently the naked variety identified at Bu, Howe and Crosskirk. Emmer wheat was rare but has been recorded in small quantities at Bu, Dun Vulcan and Balloch Hill, Argyll. Oats have also been recorded on some sites but always in very small amounts. Samples recovered from a number of sites were rich in weed seeds including fat hen, sorrel, chickweed, wild radish, corn spurrey and brassicas, all of which had nutritional and medical qualities and presumably, therefore, reflect a deliberate collecting policy designed to enhance the basic cereal diet.

The three farmyard animals, cattle, sheep and pigs, were all husbanded, and horses are also sometimes found. The percentages of the different species vary from site to site. This may reflect different economic strategies but it could be the result of other factors including variation in social status or behaviour. For the most part sheep predominate but at Crosskirk and Bu cattle are the most numerous. At some sites like Dun Vulcan and Scalloway pigs form an important constituent and at Dun Mor Vul large numbers of deer bones suggest that venison made a significant contribution to the diet. A detailed analysis of the assemblage from Dun Vulcan shows that cattle were kept primarily to produce milk. This involved the early slaughter of young males. Sheep were more numerous but the majority were slaughtered during the first autumn/winter. Pigs were also slaughtered early. Taken together the evidence from this site implies that feeding resources were under some pressure and only those beasts required for breeding or for milk production were overwintered. To maintain even quite small flocks and herds it would have been vital to make maximum use of all resources, from the shore line to the inland rough grazing during the summer months. The shore would have continued to provide rich gleanings throughout the winter: the importance of seaweed as a feed for sheep is evident in the area even today.

The islands and coasts are resource-rich areas and there is evidence from most sites that hunting, fishing and gathering contributed significantly to the diet. Shellfish, especially limpets, winkles and whelks, were particularly well represented as were the bones of seabirds. Fish bones have survived less well but cod, saithe, pollack, whiting and plaice were all caught, suggesting that fishing expeditions

were frequently made by boat.

Thus the varied ecological niches provided by the region yielded food in plenty so long as a range of micro-environments could be exploited. This is reflected in the settlement pattern, the great majority of the sites being in easy reach of the full range of resources. The most favoured type of location was one on good agricultural land optimally sited to allow easy exploitation of the littoral zone and the sea while at the same time being close to inland rough grazing. All the available evidence points to self-contained communities needing little recourse to communally organized redistributive networks.

Conclusion

The foregoing survey has given some idea of the range of economic strategies adopted by the Iron Age communities of Britain. Knowledge has advanced rapidly since the 1980s and the methods of study now employed will allow a dramatic improvement of our understanding as more sites are excavated. There is, however, still a long way to go before we can begin fully to appreciate food-producing regimes as dynamic systems.

Standing back from the detail, certain general points are worth emphasizing. First and foremost is the fact that for much of the country there is sufficient evidence to suggest a significant increase in population throughout the first millennium BC. In parallel with this there are clear indications, in some areas, of soil impoverishment while in other more marginal zones climatic deterioration cannot have failed to have driven agriculture from the higher altitudes. The result of all this is that in favoured areas settlement density increased, heavier soils were opened up to permit occupation and a greater diversification occurred in agriculture, and probably in husbandry.

In some parts of the country, in particular in the north and west, it seems probable that homestead settlements were self-contained, able to satisfy their own food requirements but unable (or unwilling) to produce a surplus for organized exchange. This kind of system can be styled a *sufficer economy*. In other areas, however, in Devon and Cornwall and south-west Wales in particular, there are clear indications of a dichotomy between producer settlements with an agricultural base and consumer settlements of higher status. This type of system we might call a *clientage economy*. At a more complex level is the economy of the hillfort-dominated zone stretching from Wessex to the Welsh borderland. Here there is evidence for the production of surpluses which were stored in specially designated settlements (the hillforts) where a range of services including the articulation of exchange mechanisms were provided. The system was complex and

must have involved intraregional exchange on a considerable scale. We might call this a *redistribution economy*.

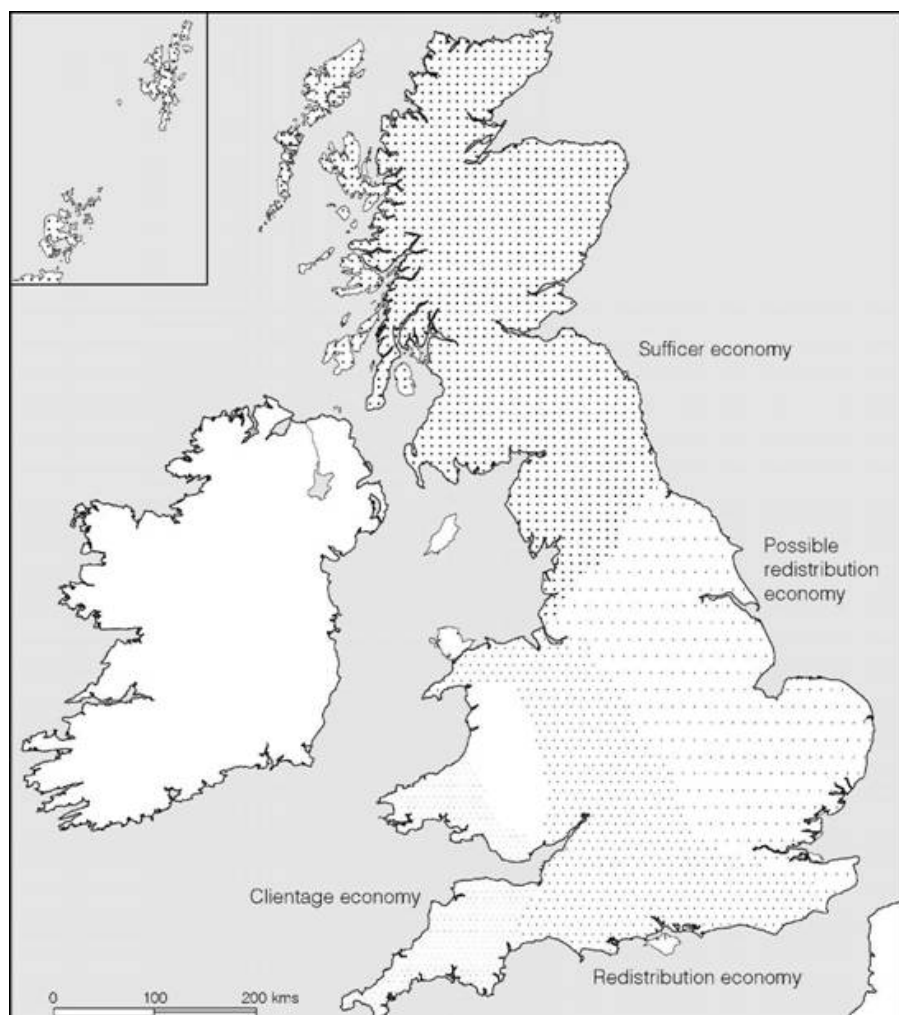


Figure 16.15 *Economic systems in Iron Age Britain (source: author).*

Clearly this simple threefold division is a gross oversimplification of an immensely complex pattern but it serves to provide some kind of preliminary ordering to the data and contains the more evident variables. The map (Figure 16.15) is an attempt to show the geographical extent of these economies in the Middle Iron Age.

That there was change, and in some areas quite rapid change, has been emphasized in the more detailed discussions but, with the exception of Wessex, the evidence is too coarse-grained for the

trajectories to be defined or for the causative factors to be teased out. None the less these matters are of profound importance in allowing us to understand social dynamics and we will need to return to them again later in [chapter 21](#).

	<i>Early Iron Age (percentages)</i>	<i>Middle Iron Age (percentages)</i>	<i>Late Iron Age (percentages)</i>
Sheep	52	62	43
Cattle	29	18	27
Pig	11	14	16
Horse	7	3	11
Dog	1	1	2

Exchanges with the wider world

That the British Isles were in contact with Continental Europe throughout the Iron Age is evident from many aspects of the material culture and from occasional anecdotes recorded in the classical literature. At times there may have been organized trade with well-defined procedures and recognized rates of exchange, but there were many other ways in which exotic material and ideas found their way into Britain, ranging from folk movements to systems of gift exchange between élites. Archaeology can seldom distinguish precisely between the various possible systems. In the discussion to follow, the scope of the evidence is laid out, roughly in chronological order, and, where it is thought to be appropriate, some of the wider implications of the material are discussed.

Britain, by virtue of its geographical position, has always been receptive of influences from two directions: from central and northern Europe across the North Sea (though with little direct Scandinavian influence (Thrane 1975, 233–5)); and from the Mediterranean and Iberia along the Atlantic coastal routes to south-west Britain and the Irish Sea province (Cunliffe 2001). Both spheres of contact were maintained throughout the Iron Age, but superimposed on these broad patterns were a variety of processes which influenced the intensity of contact and thus the volume of material which passed through the exchange systems. The reasons for these variations are difficult to isolate: they may have involved political policies which deliberately encouraged or hindered relationships, or social factors such as the development of conserving or inward-looking attitudes in society resulting in a lack of motivation to engage in commerce or social intercourse. Changing economic pressures among Continental communities would also have contributed to the complex situation. Occasionally these separate factors can be isolated with some degree of certainty but frequently they remain ill-defined and confused.

Viewed against the *longue durée* the beginning of the Iron Age in the eighth century BC marked a point of significant reorientation in the relationship between Britain and Europe. Until this time the Atlantic seaways had been the dominant axis of contact linking western areas of the British Isles to the coastal regions of western France and Iberia in a complex network of interactions fuelled, most probably, by

exchange in metals – copper, tin and gold – with which the ocean-facing zone was well provided. Although the Atlantic seaways continued to be active in the following centuries, from the eighth century BC onwards the networks which linked Britain to middle and northern Europe seem to have become the dominant interface. Why this change took place is not easy to say. No doubt many factors were involved. Among them would have been the establishment of the Phoenician port-of-trade at Cadiz around 800 BC and the Phoenician take-over of the southern part of the Atlantic system. Another factor is the growth in power of the Hallstatt élite in west central Europe at about the same time and the new demands which this may have put on long-established exchange networks. And bound up with these new dynamics was the rapid development in the use of iron as a more effective material for making tools and weapons. The increasing use of iron rendered less essential consistent access to the copper and tin supplies of the west.

It will be convenient, in the discussion to follow, to deal first with the newly developing contacts with middle and northern Europe before considering the effects of these changes on the Atlantic system.

Contacts with middle Europe: eighth and seventh centuries (Figure 17.1)

The beginning of what can reasonably be called the Iron Age in Europe is linked to the development of the Hallstatt culture, characterized by the appearance of a horse-riding aristocracy using a long slashing sword and frequently burying their dead in timber-built tombs beneath barrows. Some of the burials were very rich, containing trappings belonging to the chieftain's horses as well as a cart upon which the body may have been transported to the grave, along with weapons and selected items of personal equipment. Rich burials of this type cluster in the Czech Republic and southern Germany but are known sporadically across most of central Europe, spreading into central and southern Belgium. What their sudden appearance means is not immediately clear. Some writers proposed an invasion of an eastern aristocracy, ultimately from the Steppes, spreading west and gaining overlordship of the Late Urnfield communities. In support of such a view, close parallels are drawn between the harness-fittings and burial rites in the two areas; moreover, the rapid spread of the burials over Europe would be consistent with the concept of a mobile warrior aristocracy. Against this view, however, it can be argued that the characteristic long sword of the Hallstatt warriors owes nothing to eastern Cimmerian influence

(Cowen 1967) and is best seen as the invention of the Late Urnfield bronze-smiths in response to cavalry warfare. Similarly, there is nothing new about rich burial rites involving the use of vehicles. Earlier examples are known in central and northern Europe but only incompletely, since the cremation ritual has destroyed much of the evidence. Extending these arguments, a more convincing model can be constructed which supposes that the Hallstatt aristocracy is simply an indigenous élite adopting the rite of inhumation and making an increased use of the horse as a cavalry animal. The arguments for and against these two views cannot be paraded in full here, but the majority of scholars now favour the latter view.

In Europe the chronology of the period is now tolerably well known. In the central region of southern Germany archaeologically imposed terminology recognizes the change from the Late Urnfield period, Hallstatt B2/3, to Hallstatt C as the transition to the Iron Age. Detailed typological studies, together with precise dates derived from dendrochronology, now place this change at around 800 BC and distinguish two phases in the earlier Hallstatt period. The first (Ha C1a), dating to 800–730/20 BC, is characterized by wagon burials and a distinctive bronze sword named after the site of Gündlingen, the form of which is rooted in indigenous traditions. The second phase (Ha C1b), dating to 730/20–620 BC, is characterized by the iron Mindelheim sword. The later Ha C2 phase (Pare 1998) is usually taken as lasting up to about 600 BC. In terms of the British bronze traditions (above, pp. 75–82) Ha C1a roughly corresponds with the period of overlap between the Ewart Park assemblage and the Llyn Fawr assemblage in the period 800–750. Since there is no sound reason to argue for there being any significant time lag between the first appearance of artefacts in west central Europe and their arrival in Britain we can allow that Gündlingen bronze swords and horse gear may have begun to reach Britain in the first half of the eighth century BC.

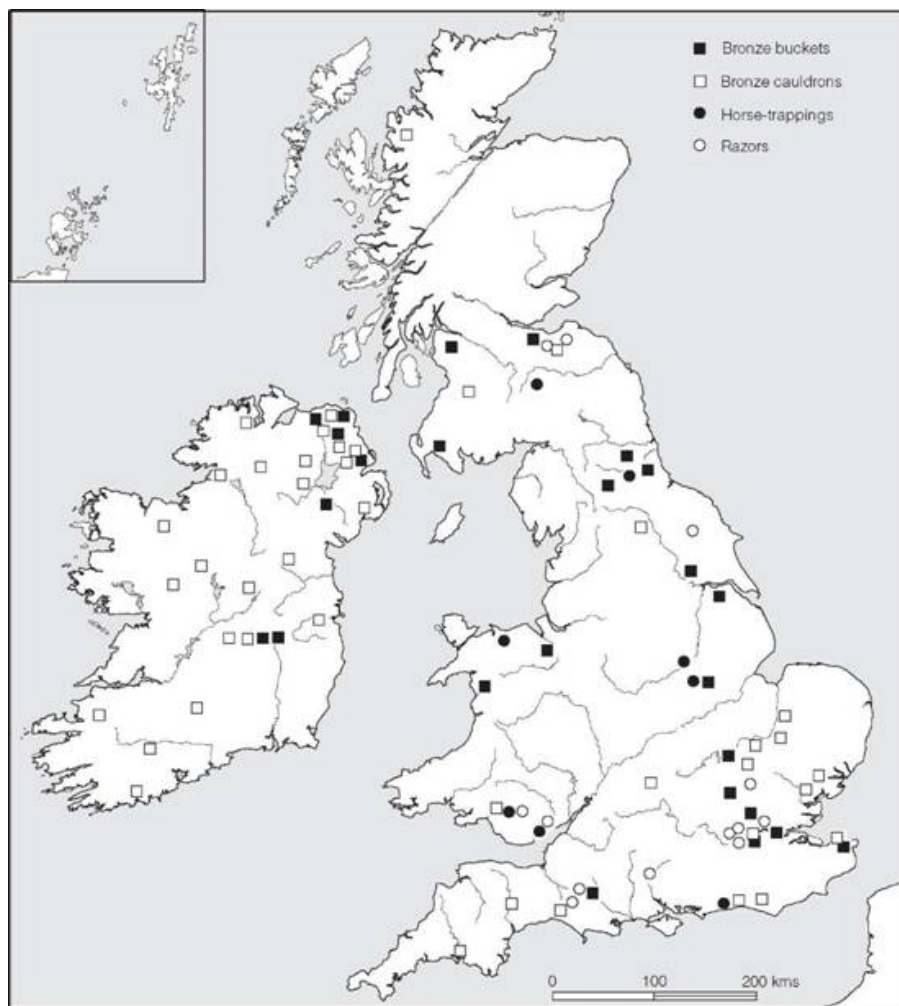


Figure 17.1 *Distribution of selected types of Hallstatt metalwork (sources: various including Hawkes and Smith 1957 with additions).*

The Gündlingen sword and its characteristic winged chapes are found widely distributed in north-western Europe including the British Isles and Ireland. In a detailed study, Cowen (1967) has distinguished four broad classes of Gündlingen sword on the basis of their hilt form (Figure 17.2). Of his classes a and b, both thought to be Continental products, twelve are known from Britain – eight of them from the Thames area; but with the possible exception of the sword from Ebberston, Yorks., none is from a closed archaeological context. Once established in Britain, the new weapon-type was closely copied by the local swordsmiths, giving rise to Cowen's type c and d, of which

twenty-seven recognizable examples are known in Britain and two from the Continent. Cowen has argued that in parallel with this development, various composite and hybrid forms were manufactured locally as native inventiveness took over, culminating in the evolution of the *Thames type* of sword, which represents the eventual dominance of the native traditions over the foreign. The type proved to be popular not only in southern Britain but also in north-western Europe, where some fifteen exported examples have been recognized. Although it has been suggested that the Thames type, rather than being derived from the Gündlingen prototype, was in fact its predecessor (Schauer 1972), the British evidence argues in favour of Cohen's view.

The long sword was kept in a sheath of wood or leather terminating in a metal chape, the sides of which were splayed out into wings so formed, it is suggested, to enable a mounted warrior to keep the end of the sheath steady with his left foot while drawing the sword with his right hand. The chapes, like the swords, are characteristic of Continental burials and occur sporadically in Britain; there are eight known from England and ten from Ireland (Figure 17.3).

The occurrence of the swords and chapes in Britain (Figure 17.4) requires explanation. Clearly a number of weapons must have been brought in from the Continent, but conversely, once British manufacturing centres had developed, home-produced varieties were exported. Without special pleading, simple exchange mechanisms could explain the entire pattern. If, as was once argued, the swords had accompanied an immigrant warrior élite one would have expected them to be buried with the dead in the Continental manner, but this is not so; the majority were found in rivers where, like their Late Bronze Age predecessors, they had been deliberately deposited. No certain burial find is known in Britain – with the possible exception of the ill-recorded discovery at Ebberston in Yorkshire, where two swords and a chape were found together with a quantity of human bones. Even if this is accepted as a typical Hallstatt C burial in Continental style, it need not necessarily represent a foreign warrior aristocrat. Hallstatt swords are therefore most likely to have been worn by British warriors and disposed of in a manner consistent with traditions which had been in operation in Britain for centuries. The appearance of these swords is best explained in terms of a continuation of the existing exchange systems, linking Britain to northern Europe, which had been in operation for centuries.

The eighth century saw the importation of a wide range of harness- and cart-fittings from northern and central Europe and their eventual deposition here in hoards, together with locally produced tools and weapons and sometimes imports from western Europe (Figure 17.1).

Hoards of this kind are therefore of considerable significance in establishing synchronisms between local industry and datable foreign products. While it must be admitted that close dating is extremely difficult, the hoards can be divided into a loose sequence stretching throughout the eighth and seventh centuries. At the beginning of the sequence must be placed the famous collection of material found beneath a layer of stalagmite on the floor of the cave at Heathery Burn, Co. Durham. In addition to socketed spears, socketed axes, knives, gouges, awls, a bifid razor and a range of bone and stone artefacts, a group of bronze cart- and harness-fittings was recovered (Figure 17.5). The cart-fittings consisted of eight bronze bands, presumably for binding the ends of the axles of a wheeled vehicle. Similar objects are recorded in Late Urnfield contexts in central Europe dating to the ninth to eighth centuries. The harnesses are now represented by a bronze strap-distributor (i.e. a disc with perforated vertical sides to allow leather straps to cross at right angles), a ribbed disc with attachment loops, two large disc-shaped mountings and a group of bronze rings of various diameters. In addition, two cheek-pieces of bone were found. The bronzes are of the Ewart Park phase, and further dating evidence is provided by a bronze bucket (Figure 17.6) of a type in use in the eighth century – a date which corresponds well with the Ultimate Urnfield character of the material.

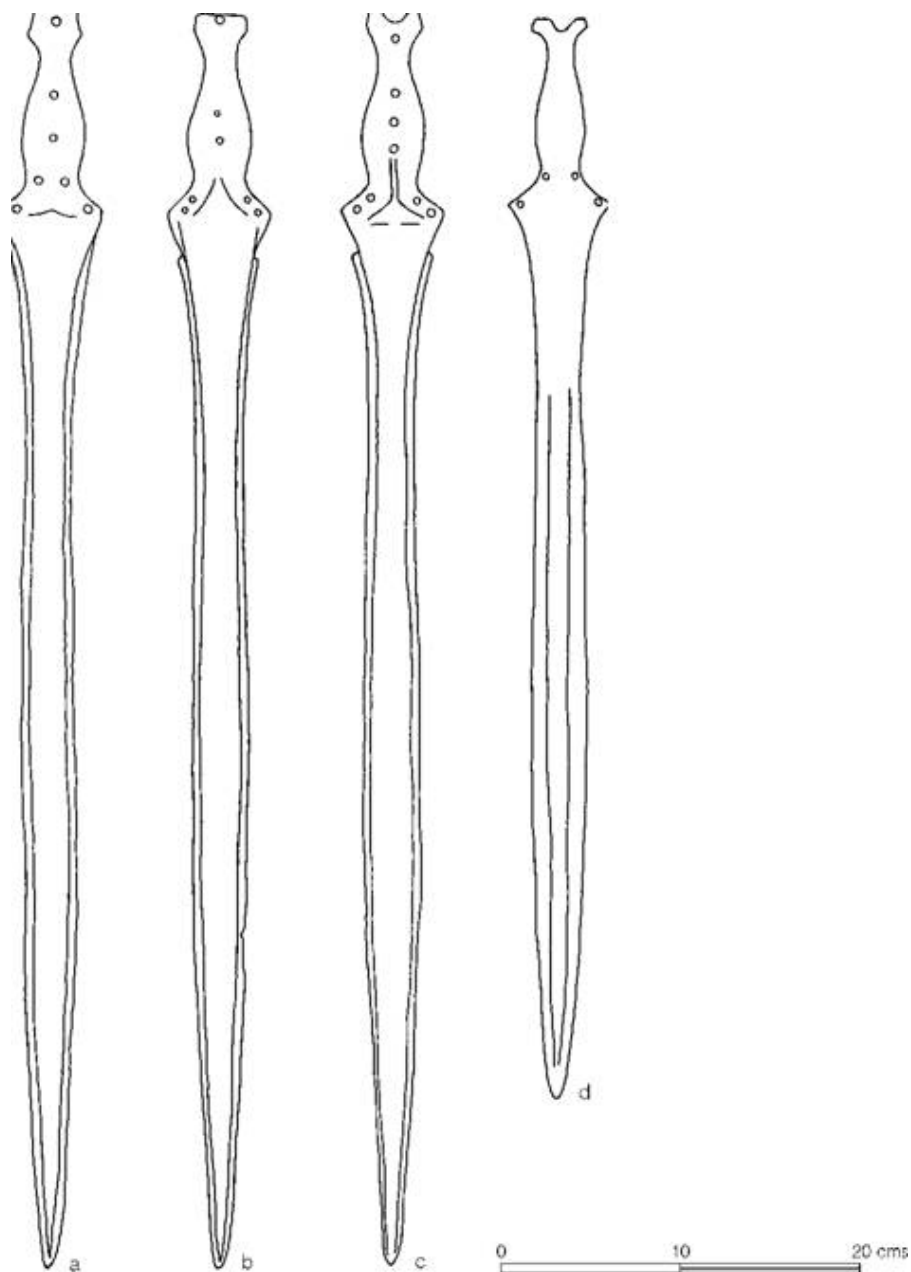


Figure 17.2 Hallstatt swords: 1 Brentford, Middx. (type a); 2 Henley, Oxon. (type b); 3 Newcastle upon Tyne (type c); 4 Cambridge (type d) (source: Cowen 1967).

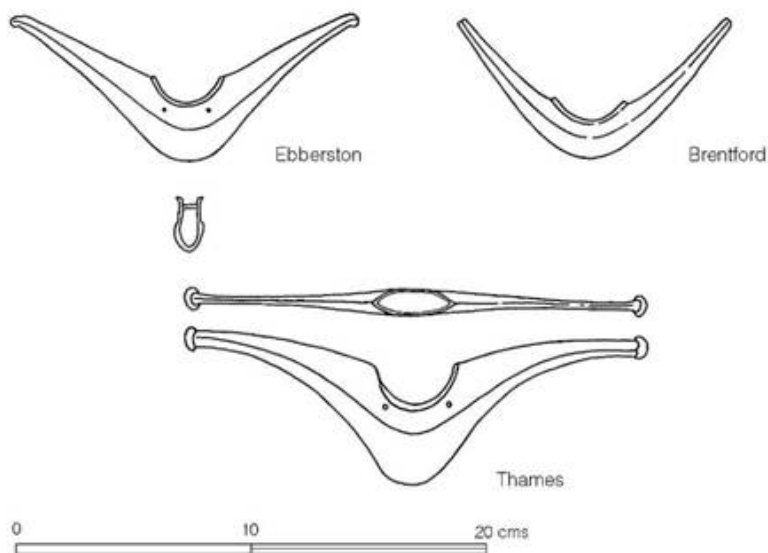


Figure 17.3 Hallstatt C chapes (sources: Ebberston, Burgess 1969b; Brentford, Wheeler 1929; Thames, R.A. Smith 1925).

The strap-distributor and the looped disc can be closely paralleled at two other hoards from Welby, Leics. (Figure 17.5), and Parc y Meirch, Denbigh. (Figure 17.7), which together with the Horsehope hoard from Peeblesshire (Figure 17.5) constitute a closely similar group of horse equipment hoards broadly datable to the eighth century. At Welby five strap-distributors were found, together with a perforated looped disc and a double-looped harness-fitting identical to those from the other two hoards. Other central European types at Welby include two T-shaped handle attachments for a bowl and possibly the small carinated bronze cup with furrowed decoration on the shoulder (Figure 5.2), of a type which is frequently reproduced in pottery in southern England. The local bronze industry was represented by socketed axes, a spear and a sword.

The Parc y Meirch hoard is altogether more substantial, containing some ninety individual pieces, among which is a group of harness-trappings including double-looped fittings and strap-distributors as well as rattle-pendants composed of plaques of bronze joined loosely together with bronze rings (Figure 17.7). This type of bridle decoration is represented in Scandinavia in the eighth and seventh centuries, and a slightly different form of the same idea appears in one of the south Belgian burials at Court-St-Etienne in the early part of the seventh century. In origin the type is probably French (Savory 1976a,

44). In the Horsehope hoard a range of harness-rings occurs, including the characteristic double-looped ring, but in addition C.M. Piggott (1955) has recognized several cart-fittings which include a dish-shaped mounting and ribbed discs, the latter possibly serving as decorative attachments for the axle caps of a small (or model) vehicle. The closest parallels for these pieces are among the Hallstatt cart burials of the Czech Republic, dating to the eighth century.

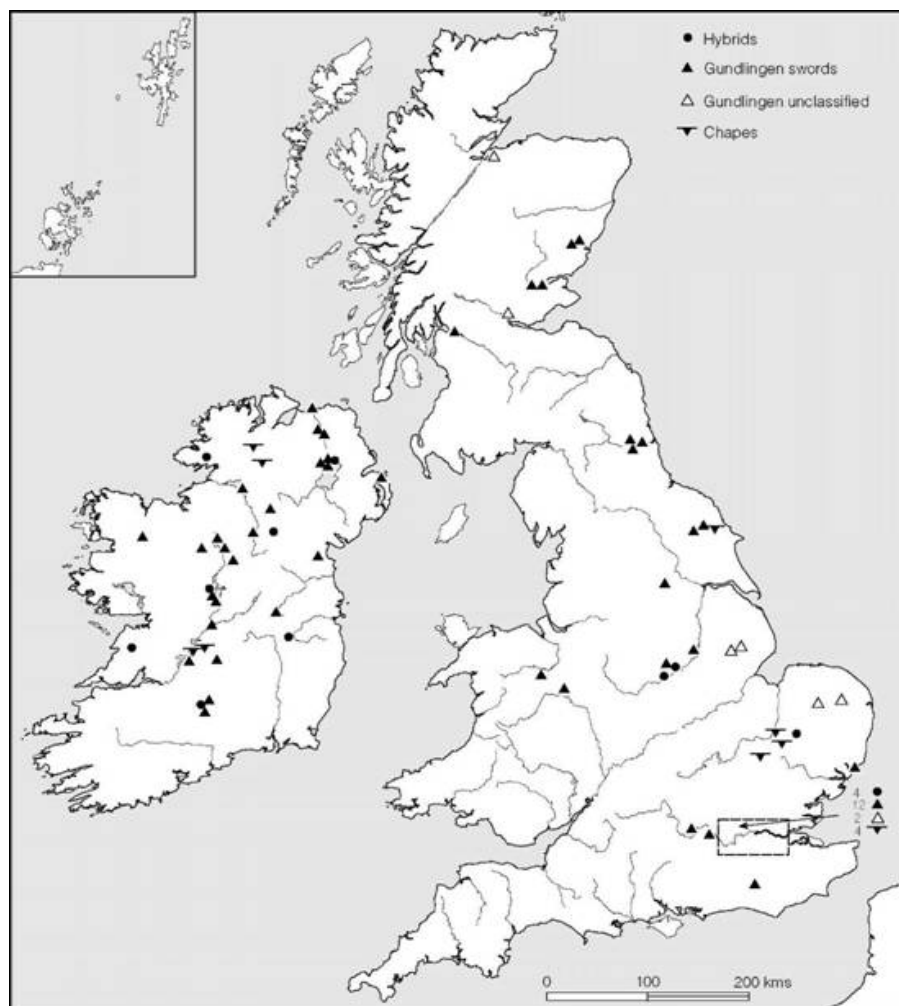


Figure 17.4 Distribution of Hallstatt swords and chapes, (source: Cowen 1967 with additions).

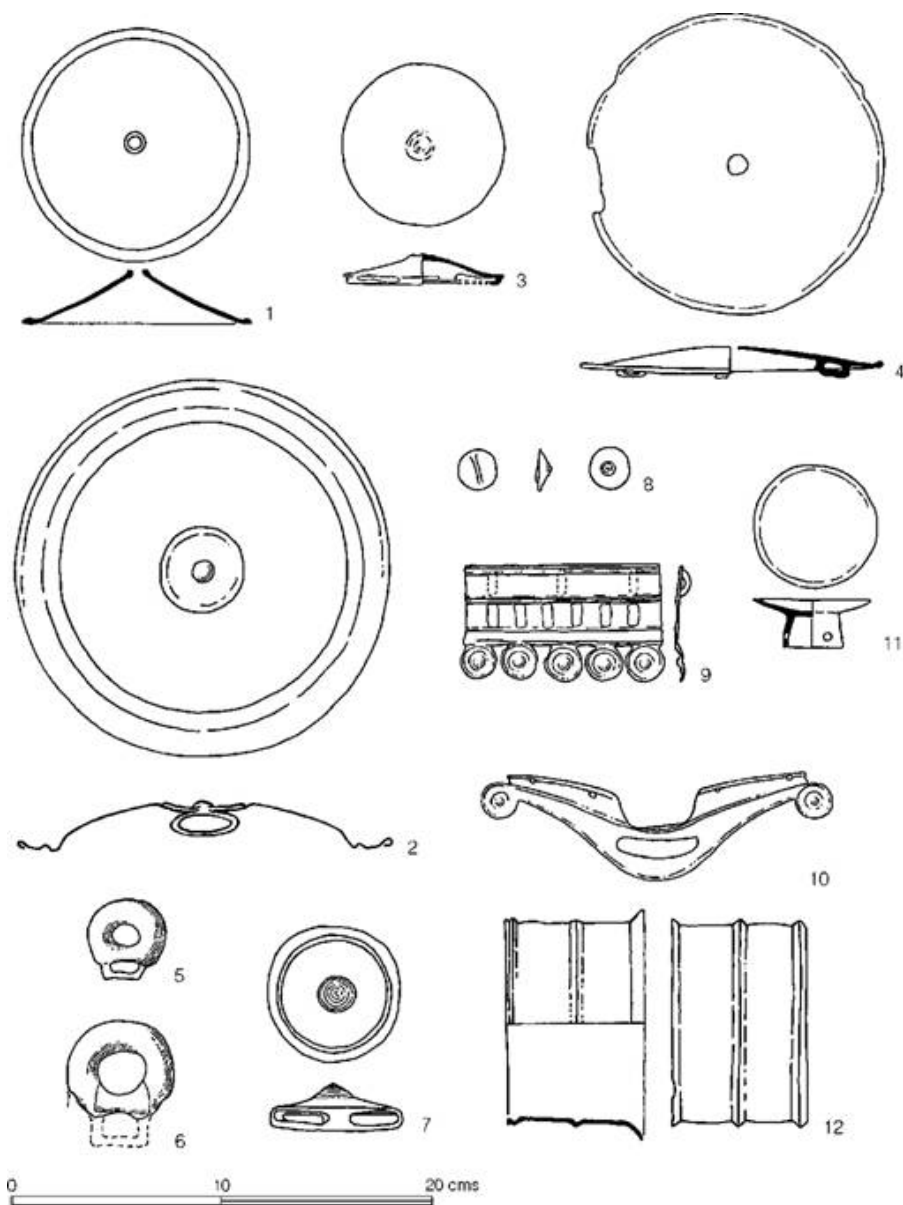


Figure 17.5 Selection of Hallstatt horse-trappings and cart-fittings: 1 Newark-on-Trent, Notts.; 2, 9, 10 Llyn Fawr, Glam.; 3, 4, 8, 12 Heathery Burn, Co. Durham; 5, 7 Welby, Leics.; 6, 11 Horsehope, Peebles. (sources: 1, 3, 4, 8, 12 *Inv. Arch. GB*; 2, 9, 10 Grimes 1951; 5, 7 Powell 1950; 6, 11 S. Piggott 1955).

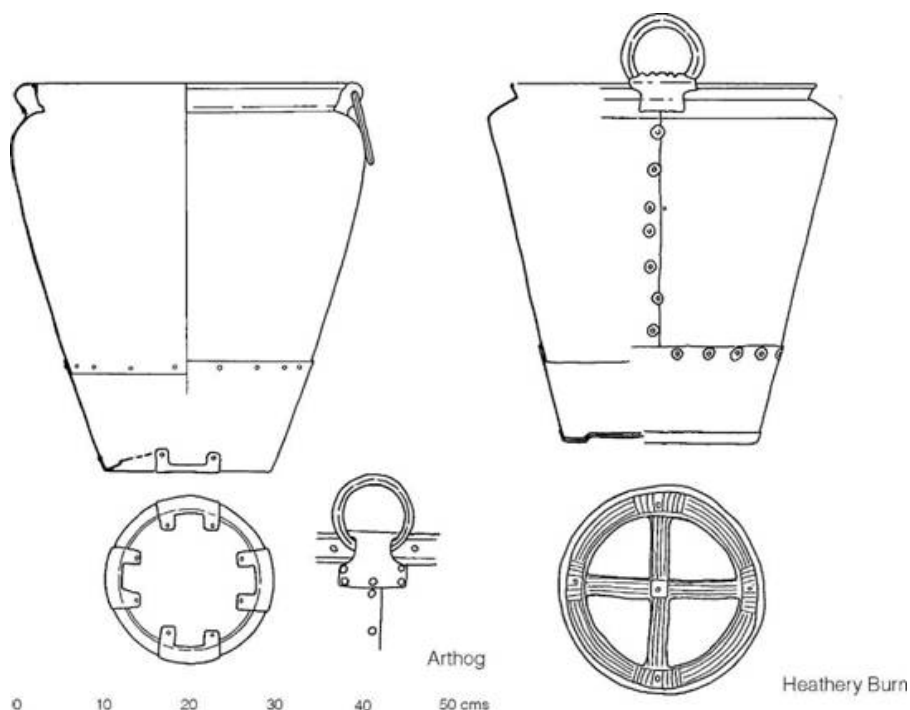


Figure 17.6 *Bronze buckets (source: Hawkes and Smith 1957).*

Of the later, seventh-century, hoards, by far the most significant is the collection of material recovered from the bottom of an ancient lake at Llyn Fawr in Glamorganshire. Local products are well represented by seven socketed bronze axes, four of them of a distinctive Welsh type, three socketed sickles, two of bronze and one of iron, and three socketed chisels. It is possible that the socketed iron spearhead recovered was also of local manufacture, but the type is simple and could equally well have been imported from the Continent, where identical forms were in use. Clearly, the presence of a local type of sickle made in iron implies that iron extraction was by now under way, if only on a small scale. The contribution of the Atlantic networks is represented by two bronze cauldrons of class B1 (Figure 17.9) – a type which first came into use in the first half of the seventh century or a little before. North European Hallstatt C types (Figure 17.5) include an iron sword with hilt plates of bone, two bronze cheek-pieces, three bronze discs or phalerae from harness decorations, an openwork harness-mount, a belt hook and a crescentic razor. All the types can be very closely paralleled in early Hallstatt C burials in southern Germany and Belgium, particularly at Court-St-Etienne. So close are the parallels that direct importation from the Continent is

the only reasonable explanation for the presence of these objects in western Britain. Precise dating for the deposition of the hoard is, of course, difficult since there is no way of assessing how long the individual items had been hoarded, nor indeed is there any certainty that all were deposited together, but the fact that all appear to be broadly contemporary and identical to Continental types hints at a date not far removed from the middle of the seventh century. By this time, then, iron production was established.

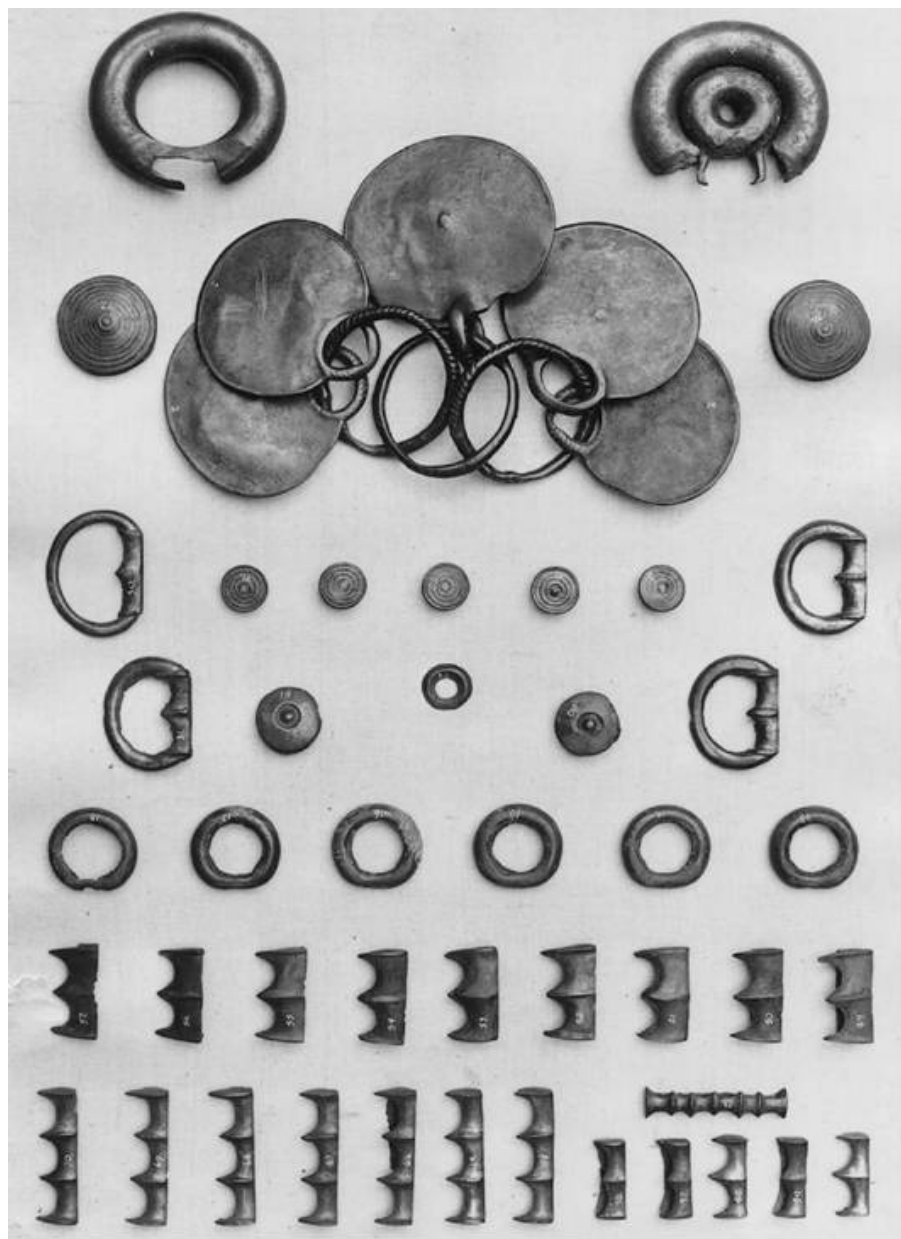


Figure 17.7 *Part of the hoard from Parc y Meirch, Denbigh. (photograph: National Museum of Wales).*

A second hoard to show an association between Late Bronze Age types and iron comes from Sompting, Sussex, where the remains of a class B2 cauldron (Figure 17.8) were recovered, together with seventeen axes and a Hallstatt phalera of hollow conical form. To one of the axes adhered a mass of corroded iron. On the basis of the cauldron, a seventh-century date would seem to be most likely, but a later date in the sixth century cannot be completely ruled out.

Finally, dredging of the river Avon at Melksham, Wilts., produced two iron spearheads, three bronze socketed spearheads, the blade of a dirk and three bronze phalera (Gingell 1979; Osgood 1995). It is possible that the items were once part of a single deposit since all belong to the seventh century.

Several other but less closely datable discoveries of harness- and cart-fittings have come to light. Phalerae of Hallstatt type have been recovered from the Thames at Brentford, Middx., with masses of bronze work of Late Bronze Age type (O'Connor 1975). A phalera of similar date with a central perforation came from a hoard at Newark-on-Trent, Notts. (Figure 17.5), together with socketed axes and spears, and a hoard at Cardiff, Glam., produced an axle cap and two Hallstatt C razors as well as various implements in the local Bronze Age tradition.

This brief survey of the more significant hoards leaves very little doubt that throughout the eighth and seventh centuries, harness- and cart-fittings of Continental type were finding their way into this country in some quantity and not infrequently ending up in hoards along with local types. The mechanisms by which this material arrived are impossible now to recover. Conceivably horses and their tack were being traded together, perhaps with carts, in a system of élite exchange but we cannot completely rule out the possibility that a few people were now making their way into the country, bringing with them the outward and visible signs of their aristocracy.

Another group of items which might be regarded as representative of élite status are high-shouldered bronze buckets or situlae, of which twenty or so have been found in Britain and Ireland (Hawkes and Smith 1957; Briggs 1987; Turnbull 1995). While they are evidently inspired by Continental types of the eighth century, Briggs has argued that the extant British and Irish examples are all likely to have been of local manufacture. None the less their relative popularity and wide geographical extent would imply the importation of Continental prototypes (perhaps in leather as Briggs suggests) of which no

example has yet been found. Such grand items may originally have served in displays of hospitality or feasts among the élite but a number were subsequently deposited in rivers or bogs presumably as offerings to the gods.

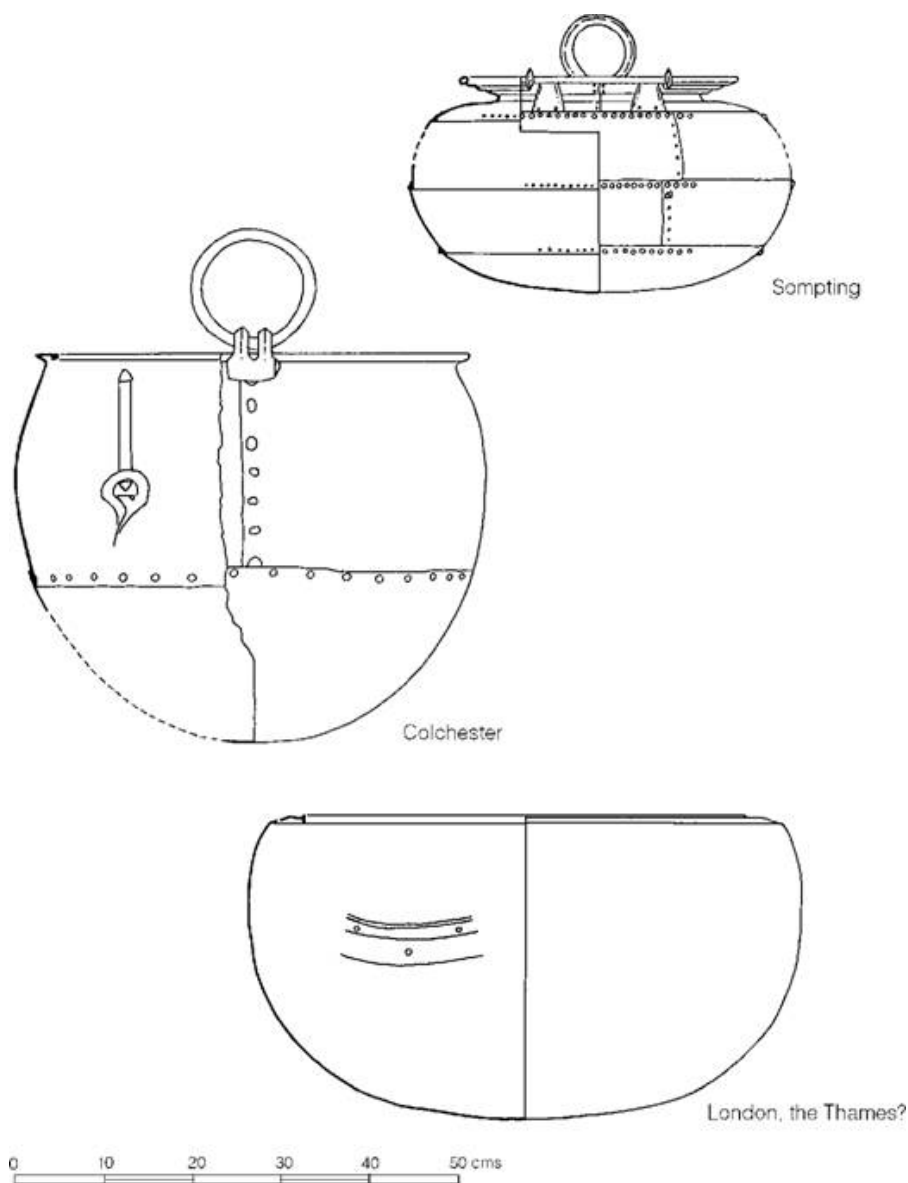


Figure 17.8 Bronze cauldrons (sources: Sompting, E.C. Curwen 1948; Colchester and London, Hawkes and Smith 1957).



Figure 17.9 *Bronze cauldron from Llyn Fawr, Glam. (photograph: National Museum of Wales).*

Superimposed upon this trade in aristocratic equipment was the importation of minor objects such as razors (Figure 17.10) (Piggott 1946), swan's-neck pins (Figure 17.11) (Dunning 1934) and brooches (Figure 17.12) (Harden 1950). Razors from the Llyn Fawr and Cardiff hoards have already been mentioned; others have come from the settlements at Staple Howe, Yorks., and Potterne, Wilts., from a hoard at Danebury, Hants, unstratified from early occupation sites on Ham Hill and South Cadbury, and as isolated finds from half a dozen or more sites. Razors are frequently found in Hallstatt burials on the Continent, where they must represent a standard piece of a warrior's equipment (Meyer 1986, 73–4). The British finds do not, however, come from burials and many of them may have been manufactured locally.

Swan's-neck pins occur sporadically in Britain. In all about a dozen are known, mainly from the south, but apart from the examples at the settlement site of All Cannings Cross, Wilts., they are not generally found in closely stratified contexts, and since the type is likely to have continued in use for some time, it is not a very useful chronological indicator. Even less certainty attaches to the large number of Hallstatt

fibulae from Britain ([Figure 17.12](#)). Not one has been recovered in an Iron Age context, but the number is so great that some at least must have found their way into Britain in the eighth to sixth centuries, on the dresses of visiting womenfolk or as traded trinkets.

In north-eastern Scotland a more substantial group of Continental-inspired metal types has been found, constituting what is called the Covesea phase of the local metal industry (Coles 1962b). Dominant among the types which define the phase are simple penannular armlets with their terminals expanded outwards, related to a type found in Late Urnfield contexts in northwestern Europe, whence it is suggested they were imported to Scotland. In two important hoards, Wester Ord, Ross, and Braes of Gight, Aberdeen, Covesea armlets were found associated with penannular necklets with free-swinging loops and pendants. These too have close north European parallels dated to c. 700 BC. In a third hoard of some significance, from Bal-mashanner, Angus, three Covesea armlets were found with a bronze bowl and an iron ring, demonstrating beyond doubt the overlap between the Covesea phase and the use of iron. Other associations showed that Covesea types were used in parallel to an already vigorous indigenous bronze industry, the various phases of which are named after the hoards at Adabrock, Ballimore and Tarves (Coles 1962b).

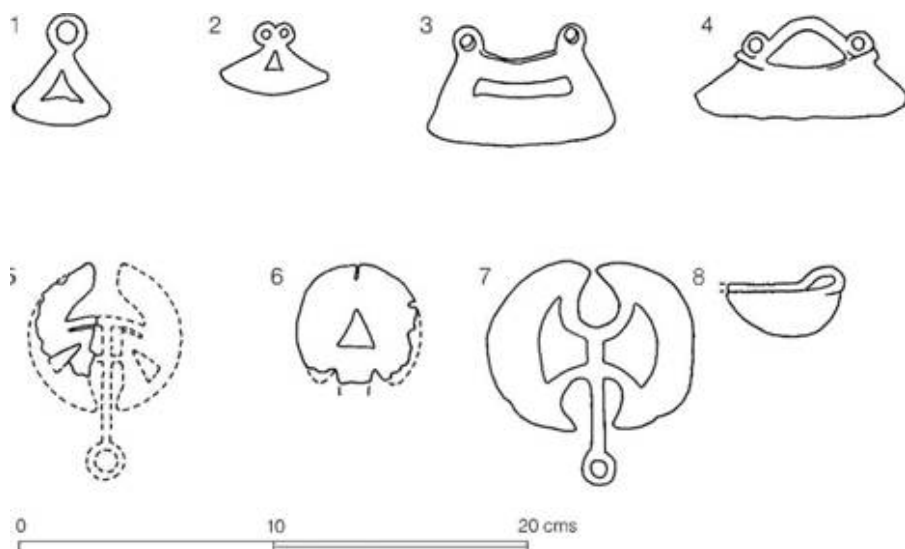


Figure 17.10 Hallstatt razors: 1, 6 Cardiff, Glam.; 2 Llyn Fawr, Glam.; 3 River Thames at Richmond, Surrey; 4, 5, 8 Staple Howe, Yorks.; 7 Midlothian (sources: 1, 6 Nash-Williams 1933b; 2 Grimes 1951; 3, 7 C.M. Piggott 1946; 4, 5, 8 Brewster 1963).

That Scotland appears to have maintained direct contact with northern Europe at this time is also shown by the distribution of distinctive sunflower swan's-neck pins ([Figure 17.16](#)): thirteen from Scotland, one from Ireland and one from Fengate, Northants. Coles (1959) believed that the genesis of the type – the fusing of the Hallstatt swan's-neck pins and the Irish-Scandinavian sunflower pins – probably took place in north Germany in the sixth and fifth centuries. However, Eogan (1974a, 58) argued for an earlier origin. This is supported by the fact that three Scottish hoards, St Andrews, Grosvenor Crescent, Edinburgh, and Tarves, Aberdeenshire, show that these pins were found in direct association with Ewart Park metalwork of the ninth to eighth centuries.

While a north European origin can be demonstrated for the Covesea types and the sunflower pins, the nature of the contact is far less clear. It has been suggested that the distinctive flat-rimmed pottery found at Covesea itself, Balmashanner and a number of other sites is of Late Urnfield derivation (Coles 1962b, 44), hinting at the possibility of a limited folk movement, but the pottery is so generalized that firm assumptions cannot be based on it. Seventh-century radiocarbon dates for the timber-laced forts of north-east Scotland have also been quoted to add support to the idea of an immigration from northern Europe (MacKie 1969a, 1976) but none of these observations is a compelling argument for folk movement: at best it shows a period of contact and innovation.

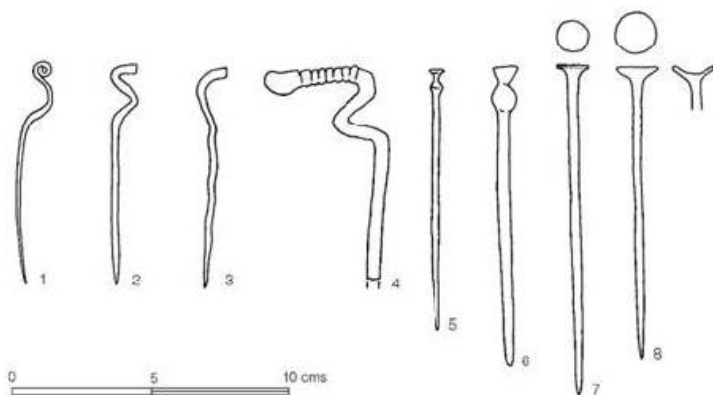


Figure 17.11 Bronze pins: 1 Hammersmith, London; 2 Brighton, Sussex; 3 Portslade, Sussex; 4, 6 All Cannings Cross, Wilts.; 5 Totternhoe, Beds.; 7, 8 Heathery Burn, Co. Durham (sources: various).

Atlantic trade: eighth to sixth centuries

Central to the discussion of Atlantic contacts in this period are the large sheet-bronze cauldrons of which about fifty have been found in Britain and Ireland and a further twenty in western France and Iberia. Two types have been distinguished, class A and class B. It was originally believed that the class A cauldrons were derived from a Mediterranean prototype of the eighth century (Hawkes and Smith 1957) but further research has shown the situation to be more complicated. Eogan (1974a, 322 n. 18) suggested that the idea was introduced from northern Europe, an idea later supported by Gerloff (1987) who argued that the earliest British examples, from Shipton and Colchester, probably date to the late second millennium. She further argues that cauldron production was taken up in Ireland, whence examples were traded along the Atlantic sea routes to England, Scotland, western France and Denmark. The tradition, once established in Ireland, continued with the development of the class B cauldron in the seventh and sixth centuries BC. Associations between cauldrons and Hallstatt C types are known at Sompting and Llyn Fawr.

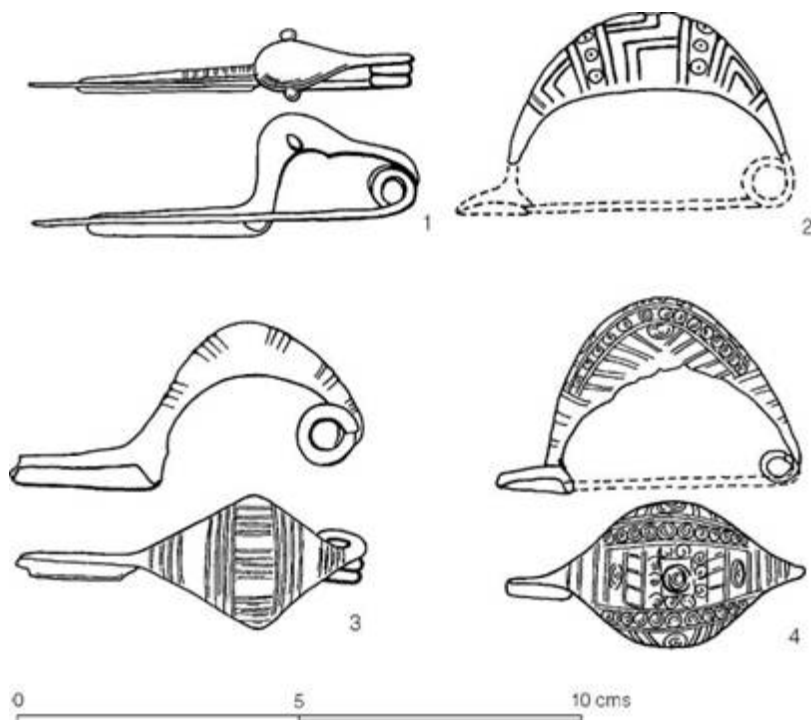


Figure 17.12 Hallstatt fibulae: 1 Hod Hill, Dorset; 2 York; 3 North Wraxall, Wilts.; 4 Box, Wilts. (sources: 1,4 R.A. Smith 1925; 2 *Antiq. Journ.* 12 (1932), 454; 3 Cunnington and Goddard 1934).

The exchange networks along the Atlantic coast of Iberia, France

and Britain, which had intensified in the Late Bronze Age, continued in the eighth century, by which time the tools and weapons of the Carp's-Tongue Sword Complex were being widely distributed throughout northwestern France and south-eastern Britain (above, [Figure 4.4](#)). That the system continued into the seventh century in parallel with the arrival of Hallstatt C influences is shown by the occurrence of a Hallstatt C razor with Carp's-Tongue Sword material in a hoard on Ile Guenoc, Finistère (Briard 1957, figure 28) and a radiocarbon date of 559 ± 130 BC for a context at Saint- Gugen, Loudéac, Côtes-d'Armor.

On both sides of the Channel there appeared at about this time large numbers of small nonfunctional axes with rectangular sockets and unprepared cutting edges, known as Breton or Armorican axes. Altogether in north-western France, it is estimated that 315 hoards contained this type exclusively, producing some 38,000 individual specimens (Briard 1995, 164; Giot *et al.* 1995, 77–93), and the type is found widely in south-east Britain. One view is that they formed some kind of currency and continued to be used as such into the fifth century or even later. At Saint-Martin-des-Champs, Finistère, Breton axes were found in association with an iron ingot, demonstrating a late survival. The axes, then, are the last manifestation of the Atlantic bronze exchange systems, out of which were to grow the sophisticated trading contacts first mentioned by classical writers in the fourth century, and to which, a few centuries later, Caesar refers in some detail.

European contacts: sixth to fifth century

In central Europe the change to the Hallstatt D stage of culture took place a little before 600 BC. By this time the central areas of development, typified by the rich chieftains' burials, had shifted west into the middle Rhine and Moselle region and into Burgundy – areas which now benefited from the new trade routes along the Rhône that had opened up following the foundation of the trading port of Massilia (Marseilles). Trading systems were by this time well established between central Europe and the Mediterranean world, and luxury goods belonging to wine-drinking and feasting rituals were being imported from Greek and Etruscan workshops, eventually finding their way into the tombs of the aristocracy (Cunliffe 1988a, 24–35). Trading contacts between Britain and the Continent appear to have been less intensive in the sixth and early fifth centuries than they had been in the preceding 100 years, but nevertheless a number of imported metal objects of Hallstatt D type are known.

The Thames was evidently an important point of entry, to judge by

the number of new types found in the London area. From the Thames came a short iron sword with an antennae-shaped hilt ([Figure 17.13](#)) (Smith 1925; Stead 1984b) characteristic of sixth-century Continental types, and from the same general provenance was recovered a simple hemispherical bronze cauldron of Hallstatt D type (Hawkes and Smith 1957) which can be paralleled on many west central European sites, more commonly in the second half of the century ([Figure 17.8](#)).

The long-established school of swordsmiths in the Thames region, who by now were manufacturing their own varieties of the Hallstatt C imports, soon absorbed the idea of the Hallstatt D short dagger – a type in use in the early sixth century in southern Germany – and began to manufacture their own elegant versions with an improved method of suspension using twin loops at the back of the sheath to strengthen the attachment to the belt ([Figures 17.13](#) and [17.14](#)). Only one certain import is known, found in the bed of the Thames at Mortlake ([Figure 17.13](#), no. 3) and its sheath was probably repaired in Britain (Jope 1983). Diplomatic gifts of this kind inspired a vigorous British tradition. The industry continued to flourish until about 300 BC, influenced in its later stages by new La Tène ideas coming in after about 450 (Jope 1961a).

A comparable example, showing the same process of adoption and rapid modification of Hallstatt D ideas, is exhibited by the representative of a class of fibulae found in the Thames near Hammersmith (Hodson 1971). Evidently there must have been schools of craftsmen working in the area, always receptive of new Continental ideas.

More widely flung contacts with northern Italy are emphasized by the ribbed pail, dug up at Weybridge, Surrey, made of strips of corrugated bronze riveted together along a single vertical seam and provided with two movable handles (Stead 1984a, 43–4). The type is well known in western Europe and was probably made in a European workshop some time in the sixth century whence, directly or indirectly, it reached Britain (Stjernquist 1967, 70–4).

Several other Italian Mediterranean bronzes have been found in Britain, but all in dubious circumstances (Harbison and Laing 1974). Among the more significant should be mentioned a fragment of ‘Rhodian’ flagon of late seventh- to early sixth-century date found at Minster in Kent, an Etruscan bronze oenochoe of the late sixth to early fifth century from Northampton, a trefoil-mouthed flagon of the early fifth century from the river Crouch, Essex, and two bronze jugs of fourth-century date, one from Tewkesbury, the other from Bath. In no case is it possible to be sure that the vessel was a contemporary Iron Age import, and the possibility must therefore be allowed of the more recent importation.

Other west European or Mediterranean objects found in Britain include about eighty examples of Continental fibulae dating to the period of the eighth to fourth centuries (Harden 1950). It is, of course, impossible to be sure when they were imported. Some of them may have arrived during the Roman period or even later in the collections of travellers, but many must have been imported into Britain during the time when they were current on the Continent. Other personal ornaments of Hallstatt type, including neck- and arm-rings of bronze with 'nut' moulded decoration, occur less frequently. One was found close to an early occupation site at Scarborough, Yorks., one from the hillfort of Castle Rings, Wilts. (Tomlinson 1986). Several came from the Iron Age port site at Mount Batten (Cunliffe 1988b), and another unassociated example is recorded from Clynnog, Caerns. (Figure 17.15). The general type does not seem to have been widely copied by local craftsmen.

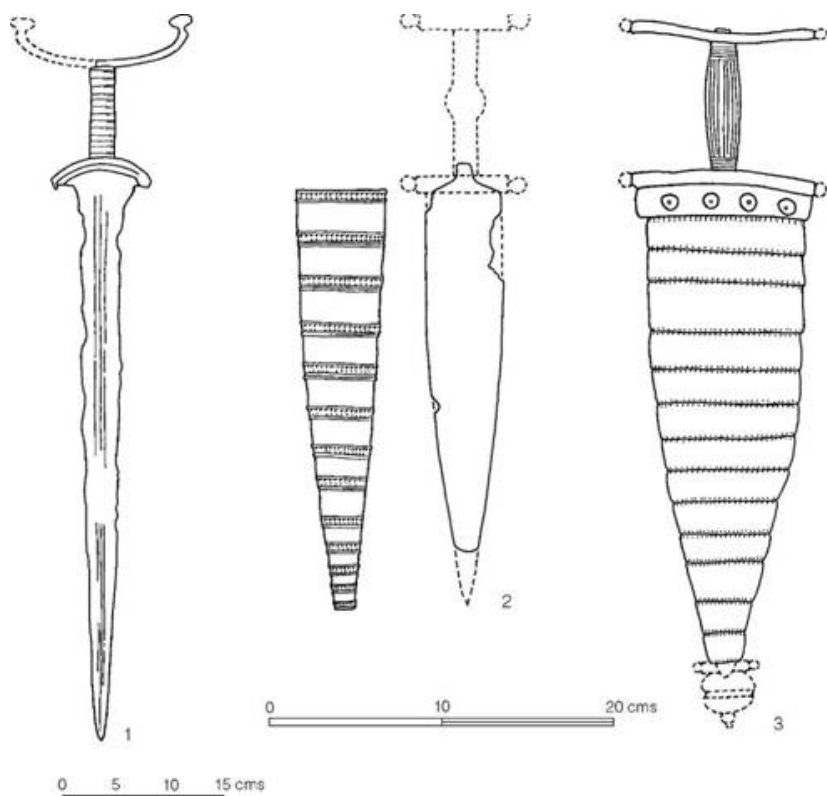


Figure 17.13 Hallstatt D weapons: 1 River Thames; 2 Battersea, London; 3 Mortlake, Surrey (sources: 1 R.A. Smith 1925; 2, 3 Jope 1961a).

Another class of imported material is pottery. Several finds of

Mediterranean vessels have been made in Britain, but again the date of their importation is, without exception, unknown since no examples have yet been found on stratified occupation sites. Several vessels have been dredged from rivers, including a Greek Black Figure kylix from the Thames near Reading, which is reliably dated on stylistic grounds to the late sixth century (Boon 1954, 178). From the same river, at Barnes, an Italic handled cup of the seventh century was dug out of the river bank, and from Barking Creek came a Greek hydriskos of the sixth century (Harden 1950, 321–2). A squat lekythos of fourth-century date was also recovered from Billingsgate. Finally, mention should be made of a group of three Greek vessels, one of them an Attic drinking cup of the late fourth century, which were found together in an artificial cave at Teignmouth, Devon, during the last century. It must be stressed that none of these finds need represent Iron Age importation, but there is nothing inherently difficult in supposing that some Mediterranean vessels found their way into southern Britain during the course of normal maritime exchanges.



Figure 17.14 Hallstatt D dagger and sheath from the River Thames at Hammersmith, London (photograph: Museum of London).

It can be seen from the above paragraphs that imported material of Hallstatt D date is sparse in Britain, but sufficient survives to imply continuous contact with the Continent throughout the sixth and early fifth centuries. Nothing in the surviving archaeological record needs, however, to be explained in terms other than of casual exchanges.

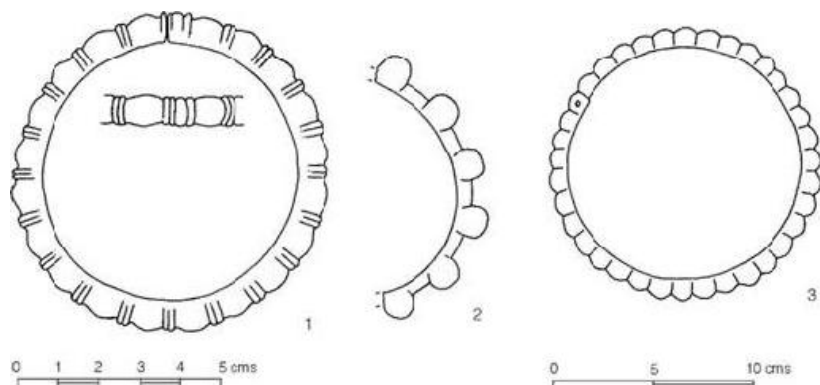


Figure 17.15 Hallstatt bracelets and neck-rings: 1 Scarborough, Yorks.; 2 Cold Kitchen Hill, Wilts.; 3 Clynnog, Caerns. (sources: 1 R.A. Smith 1934; 2 DMC; 3 Grimes 1951).

Contacts between Britain and the Continent: fifth to second century

From the fifth to the second century, contacts between Britain and adjacent parts of the Continent were maintained. Metalwork in the new La Tène style, which developed in Europe towards the beginning of the fifth century, found its way into the country largely through the exchange networks. The full corpus of material has been comprehensively reviewed and catalogued by Martyn Jope (2000). Many of the incoming types were rapidly copied by local craftsmen, giving rise to distinctive British varieties. In Yorkshire, however, a more extensive cultural assemblage appears to have been introduced, including not only metal types but alien burial customs best paralleled among the La Tène cultures of northern France. This group – referred to as the Arras culture – has been considered in some detail above (pp. 84–6). Elsewhere in Britain northern French decorative metalwork is

rare, but a fine openwork disc, probably a horse-harness decoration, was found at the hillfort of Danebury, Hants ([Figure 17.17](#)). It is closely comparable to ornaments from the late fifth-century chieftains' burials of the Marne region and is either an import or an assured local copy of one. A broadly similar type from the Thames at Hammersmith (Smith 1905, figure 122) is almost certainly a British-made version.

The sixth-century production of a distinctive series of daggers and dagger sheaths in the Thames region, noted above, was evidently carried out by local craftsmen influenced at first by Hallstatt D prototypes but soon evolving their own improved techniques and style. Production continued throughout the fifth and fourth centuries, absorbing, after about 450, La Tène improvements which were being developed in parallel on the Continent. The earliest of these La Tène-inspired sheaths, one discovered at Chelsea, is so close to northern French types of the mid- fifth century, while evidently itself of British manufacture, that the British craftsmen must have responded directly to new Continental ideas. Close contact appears only at this time; thereafter the British and French traditions diverged, hinting at the beginning of some degree of cultural isolation. The twenty or more daggers of La Tène I type found in Britain, mainly in the Thames area, can be arranged in a typological sequence lasting until the late fourth century. Among the latest to be made was the scabbard from Wisbech, decorated in a free-hand curvilinear style with S-shaped scrolls arranged in lyre and palmette patterns about a central ridge. This must be regarded as a provincial version of an art style current in Europe during the fourth century, from which the early beginnings of British Celtic art eventually developed.

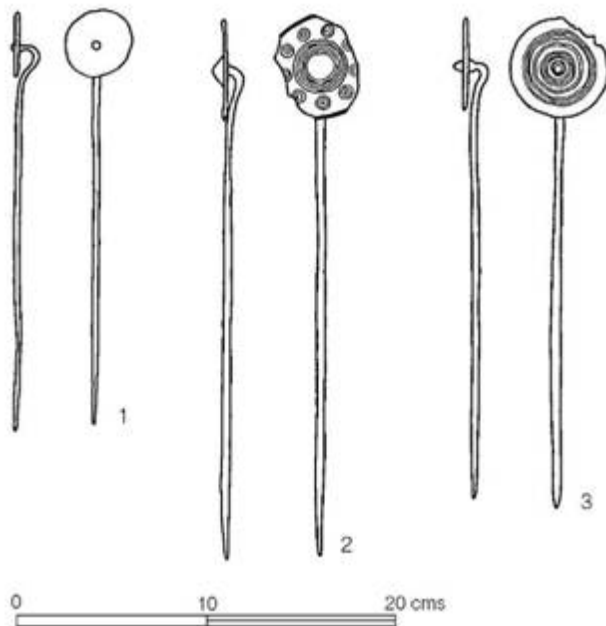


Figure 17.16 Sunflower swan's-neck pins: 1 Taves, Aberdeen; 2 Loch Broom, Ross; 3 Campbeltown, Argyll. (source: Coles 1959).

While the later British daggers continued to evolve, throughout the beginning of the La Tène period a range of swords of La Tène I type was being manufactured. At least seventeen have been identified from the rivers Thames and Witham, but of these only two or three have any claim to being actual imports. One came from Wandsworth and had a blade engraved or chased with close-set parallel lines in a style known as laddering, best represented on Swiss examples; another, from the Thames at Hammersmith, was found in a scabbard decorated at the hilt end with facing dragons in a style more common in Hungary (Stead 1984a, 47–50) (Figure 17.18). A third, possible, import was a finely decorated version from the river Trent at Sutton, Notts., which is closely similar to examples belonging to the Swiss sword style. Even the scabbard from Standlake, Oxon. (Figure 18.26), which has close connections with Continental technological tradition, is best regarded as a British product standing at the head of a long development series lasting throughout the rest of the pre-Roman period. What is perhaps most impressive about the British swords is their relative isolation from Continental development. This fact, together with the general lack of imported varieties, might suggest that Britain now lacked the close contacts with the Continent which it had previously maintained during the seventh and sixth centuries.



Figure 17.17 *Openwork disc of early La Tène date from Danebury, Hants, actual size (photograph: Institute of Archaeology, Oxford. Danebury Trust).*

Personal ornaments are found scattered over much of southern Britain and of these the commonest category is brooches. The earliest of the La Tène brooches found in Britain – those of La Tène I type (c. 450–300 BC) – are the most numerous: over 100 have come to light, mostly from the south-east. Characteristically they have an arching bow, bilateral spring and a catch plate made by bending the foot back to touch the bow (Figures 17.19 and 17.20). The bow is often decorated with simple grooved, curvilinear or stamped decoration and the foot is usually expanded into a disc shape decorated with stamped or incised motifs, or very occasionally inlaid with coral. The first serious attempt to classify these brooches was put forward by Fox (1927). There have been several subsequent additions to the debate, but the publication of a full corpus (Hull and Hawkes 1987) put the subject on a firm basis and more recently Martyn Jope has thoroughly reviewed all the evidence (Jope 2000, 39–50). From the point of view of the present discussion it is sufficient to note that of the large number of La Tène I brooches known from Britain very few can be identified as actual imports. However the number alone, and the Continental style and technology which they adopt, show that Britain remained in contact with Continental developments. The earliest brooches are of the Marzabotto type found commonly in Europe north of the Alps and in smaller numbers in northern Italy (Stead 1984b, 50–2). They were in use from the late fifth to the early fourth century. At the Swiss cemetery of Münsingen, where a comprehensive sequence has been established, they are known as type Ia (Hodson 1968, 35). Of

the British examples fewer than a dozen are possible imports. The type was particularly popular in Wessex, where a distinctive local version was produced (p. 501). Of the next group, the Dux fibulae (Münsingen Ib, c. 350–280 BC), no contemporary imports have been recorded, if the Wallingford examples are now accepted as recent imports (Stead 1984b, 53–4), but there are a few native copies. Thereafter imported La Tène types and their copies become far less common. There is a bent silver ring characteristic of the Münsingen Ic phase (c. 280–200 BC) from Park Brow, Sussex ([Figure 17.19](#), no. 8) and a few British brooches of Ic type, but the paucity of material is in marked contrast to the number of earlier La Tène types found. The same may be said of the succeeding La Tène II period (c. 200–100 BC). Thus, if the number of brooches found in Britain can be taken to be a reflection of the intensity of importation, then the period from 450 to 350 was a time of much interaction, after which, until about 100 BC, the intensity of contact had dramatically declined. The figures cannot, however, be taken too literally since a high percentage of the locally manufactured Ia types were probably being made and used in the third and even the second century. Even so the relative lack of inspiration from Continental types of the period 350 and 100 is best explained by a sharp diminution in imports.

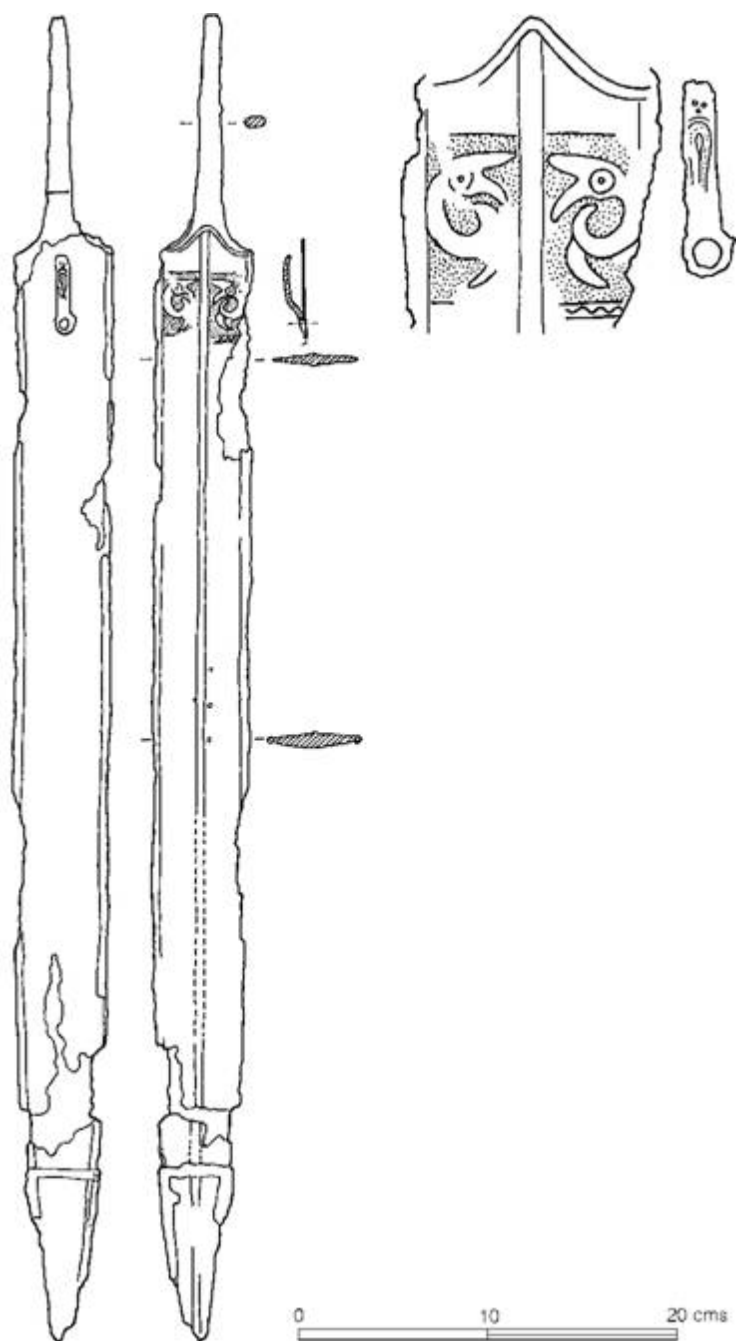


Figure 17.18 Imported La Tène sword from the Thames at Hammersmith (source: Stead 1984a).

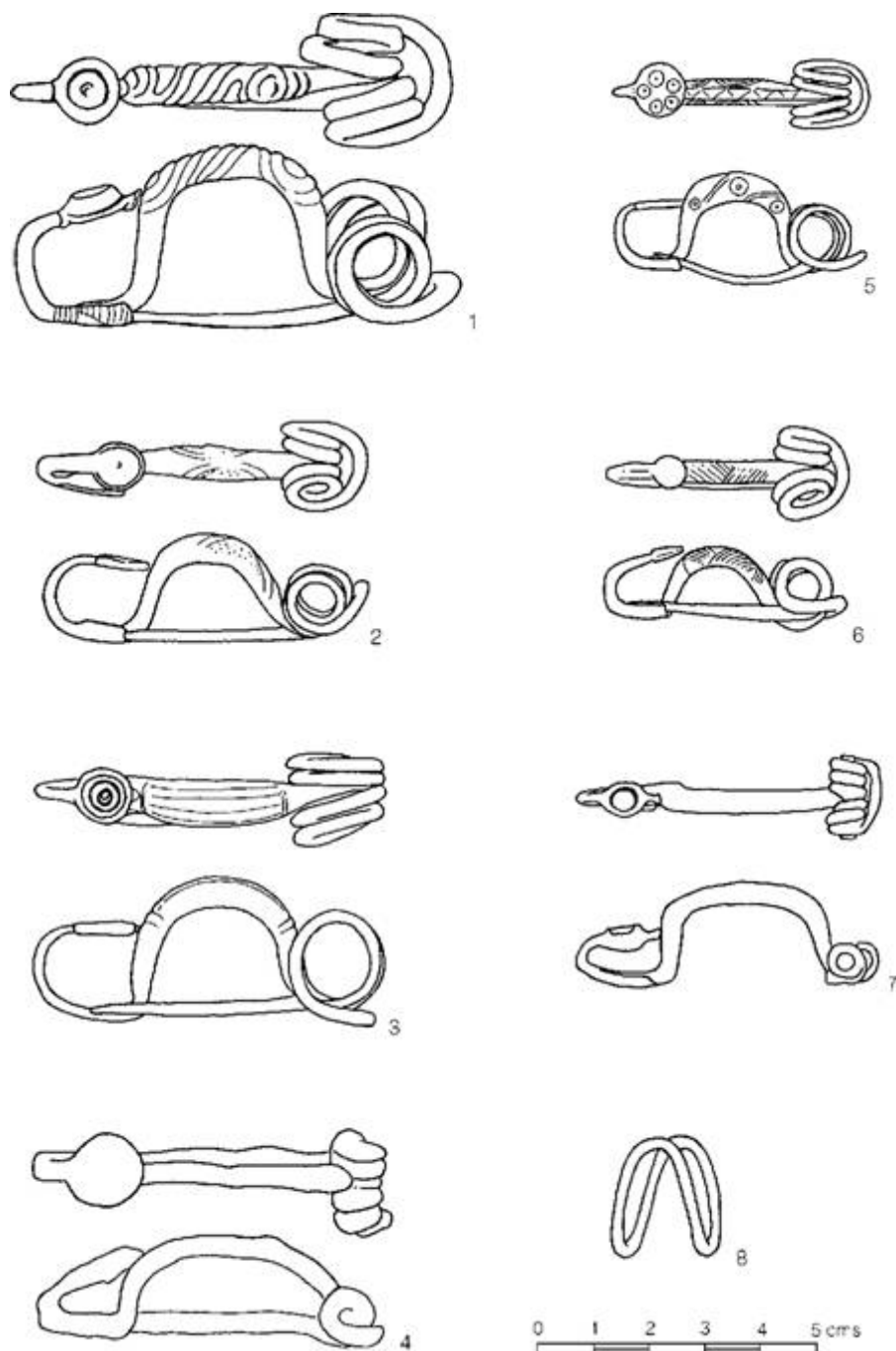


Figure 17.19 La Tène style fibulae and a bent silver ring: 1 Box, Wilts.; 2 Blaise Castle Hill, Avon; 3 Merthyr Mawr Warren, Glam.; 4 Findon Park, Sussex; 5 Water Eaton, Oxon.; 6 Blaise Castle Hill, Avon; 7 Merthyr Mawr Warren, Glam.; 8 Park Brow, Sussex (sources: 1, 5 R.A. Smith 1925; 2, 6

Rahtz and Brown 1959; 3, 7 Grimes 1951; 4 Wolseley, Smith and Hawley 1927; 8 R.A. Smith 1927).



Figure 17.20 La Tène I style fibula from Danebury, Hants (actual length: 46 mm) (photograph: Nick Bradford. Danebury Trust).

Bracelets of La Tène types are not common in Britain outside the territory of the Yorkshire Arras culture, where two basic types are found: the relatively plain version with a 'tongue-in- glove' fastening and the more elaborate knobbed and ribbed type with a thick and often heavy body formed into adjacent bosses or ribs (Figure 17.21). The plain types occur once at Cowlam and four times at Arras, both Yorkshire graves. The only other examples to be found are the pair of bracelets with circular bezels from Coygan Camp, Carm.; but here the fastening is simple and not specially tongued. The knobbed and ribbed varieties are rather more widely spread but are difficult to distinguish from Hallstatt types. It is impossible to be certain how many of these bracelets are direct imports and how many are locally made, but most of the specimens can be paralleled among La Tène I and early La Tène II contexts in eastern France and Switzerland, whence it is likely they or the types which inspired them were derived.

Trading contact between the west of Britain and the Atlantic coasts of Gaul and Iberia is well attested both in the classical literature and in the archaeological record. The fourth-century Roman poet Avienus, in his poem *Ora Maritima*, uses scraps of information taken from a very early account of the Atlantic sea-ways known as the Massaliote Periplus, which purports to describe the journeyings of the Tartessians and the Carthaginians from southern Iberia to Brittany, Ireland and Britain (Albion) for purposes of trade. After Tartessos had become a Phoenician monopoly in the early fifth century, the Greek city-states

which had previously been supplied with tin via Iberia began to look further afield for their vital supplies. One Greek merchant, Pytheas, sailed to Brittany along the Atlantic route between 330 and 325 and recorded his experiences, which survive only in the writings of later classical authors such as Strabo (Hawkes 1978; Cunliffe 2001b). Nevertheless, sufficient appears in these secondary sources to show that the tin-producing areas of the south-west were in constant contact with the Mediterranean world from the fifth century onwards, no doubt following upon trading traditions already established in ancient times.

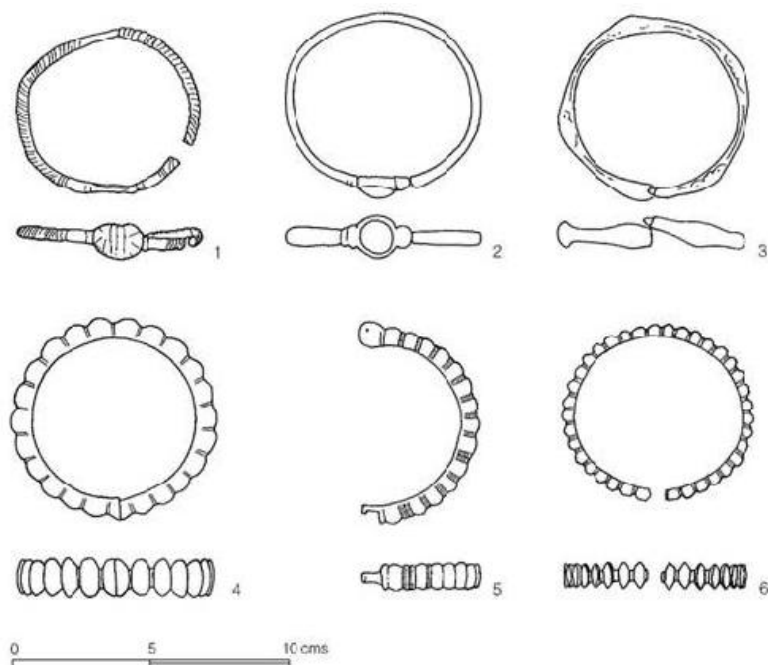


Figure 17.21 *La Tène bracelets: 1 Coygan Camp, Carm.; 2, 4 Arras, Yorks.; 3, 6 Cowlam, Yorks.; 5 South Ferriby, Lincs. (sources: 1 Wainwright 1967a; 2–6 Stead 1965).*

The texts relating to the later period are somewhat obscure and have led to extensive debate (Maxwell 1972; Cunliffe 1983; Mitchell 1983; Hawkes 1984). The question hinges upon the location of Ictis mentioned by Diodorus Siculus, in a famous descriptive passage based upon earlier sources, probably Pytheas. He describes the peninsula of Belerion where tin is to be had. After mentioning the process of extraction, leading to the preparation of knuckle-bone-sized ingots of metal, he goes on to say that they are carried

to an island which lies off Britain and is called Ictis, for at the time of ebb-tide the space between this island and the mainland becomes dry and they can take the tin in large quantities over to the island on their wagons... On the island of Ictis the merchants purchase the tin of the natives... whence it is taken to Gaul and overland to the Mediterranean.

The question is complicated however by a text of Pliny, quoting Timaeus (*Nat. Hist.* IV, 16, 104) in which he tells us that ‘there is an island named Mictis lying inwards, six days’ sail from Britain where tin is found and to which the Britons cross in boats of osier covered with stitched hides’. The two texts taken together provide a fertile ground for imaginative speculation! The simplest interpretation would be that Ictis and Mictis, despite similar sounding names, were two entirely different places, Ictis being just off the shore of south-western Britain with Mictis being considerably nearer, along the trade route, to Rome. Six days’ sail ‘inwards’ could place it anywhere off the Armorican coast as far south as the mouth of the Loire.

The location of the British trading port, Ictis, has been hotly debated, the most favoured contender being St Michael’s Mount, Cornwall, for which no shred of archaeological evidence has been presented. A better claim can be made for Mount Batten, a promontory jutting into Plymouth Sound (Cunliffe 1983). Before the construction of the Plymouth breakwater it frequently became an island at high tide. Moreover, it is admirably sited to provide a well-protected haven and to command the rivers Tamar, Tavy and Plym which lead to the metal-rich fringes of Dartmoor. There is ample archaeological evidence to show that it was actually used from the Late Bronze Age and throughout the period described by the classical writers (Cunliffe 1988b), but whether or not Mount Batten was Ictis will remain a matter of personal opinion.

An interesting discovery which may reflect on the early tin trade was made by divers exploring a reef in the estuary of the river Erme where it flows into Bigbury Bay on the south coast of Devon. The divers recovered a number of tin ingots evidently from an ancient shipwreck site. The ingots were undated and were thought to be of Dark Age date (Fox 1997) but the possibility remains that they are much earlier. Most are of bun shape but a few are quite distinctly the size and shape of a knuckle-bone recalling the description of Diodorus Siculus. That said, without firm dating evidence the intriguing possibility of this being an Iron Age wreck remains unproven.

Archaeological evidence for trade along the Atlantic sea-ways is not plentiful but contact with the south-west of Europe is demonstrated by a group of distinctive fibulae, two of bronze found at the port of Mount Batten (Figure 17.22) and two bronze and one iron from the

cemetery at Harlyn Bay on the north coast of Cornwall. The brooches are characterized by a knob-ended cross piece for the pin to pivot on, a high bow and an upturned foot ornamented with a large disc head. They belong to a well-recognized class of fifth-century brooches found in Spain and Aquitania (south-western France), and while it has been argued that the British finds were locally made (Boudet 1988), the essentially Atlantic distribution of the type is a clear indication of maritime activity which presumably brought to Britain the prototypes which inspired them.

A more enigmatic object, frequently quoted as evidence of Atlantic trade, is a small bronze statuette found on the shore of Aust close to the site of the Severn Bridge (Dawson 1980) ([Figure 17.23](#)). The figure, a female, is provided with a crescentic head-dress and has eyes enlivened with inset glass beads. Traditionally it has been referred to as an Iberian import but Stead has cast doubt on this attribution, preferring a British origin (Stead 1984b, 60). However, not only can no British parallels be quoted, but the head-dress and, more significantly, the stance and simplification of the figure have distinct analogies among first-millennium BC Iberian figurines. The uncertainty well illustrates the problems posed in attempting to identify imports.

The documentary and archaeological evidence together emphasize the continuance of well-established patterns of trade along the Atlantic sea routes from the fifth to the second century. It may have been by these means that some, at least, of the large number of Greek and Carthaginian coins arrived in Britain. The distribution pattern now extends across much of southern and eastern Britain, but rarely have the coins come from undoubted Iron Age contexts (Laing 1968). While it remains a possibility that some of them may have been brought in during the Roman period or as later collectors' items, many must have arrived during the pre-Roman period in the wake of Atlantic trade. Only one, a coin of Ptolemy V (204–181 BC) from Winchester, has so far been found stratified in an Iron Age level (Cunliffe 1964, 75; Collis 1975; Biddle 1975b).

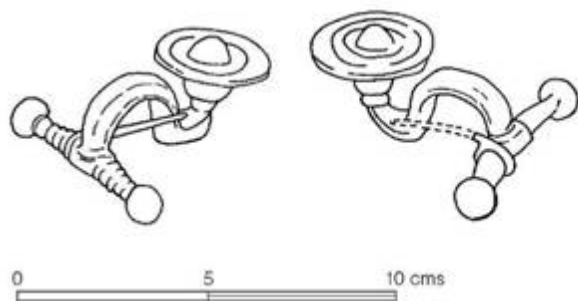


Figure 17.22 *Fibulae of 'Iberian' type from Mount Batten, Devon (source: H.O'N. Hencken 1932).*

One final item remains to be considered – the famous 'hanging bowl' found in a stone cist at Cerrig y Drudion, Clwyd, in 1924 ([Figure 17.24](#)). A reinterpretation of the surviving fragments has suggested that more than one item may be represented and that the major pieces are probably part of an ornamented lid rather than a bowl (Stead 1982), the chains being for attachment, not for suspension as originally thought. The domed surface and the underside of the flange are decorated with an elaborate scheme of incised palmettes and acanthus half-palmettes thrown into greater prominence by a cross-hatched 'basketry background'. The style of decoration has much in common with Celtic art styles in western France and in particular with the finely decorated pottery of Brittany, but the 'basketry' technique is generally considered to be a British development. Thus, one of the finest pieces of Celtic art found in Britain must remain of uncertain origin. Its importance, however, is that it demonstrates a lively exchange in artistic concepts in the western sphere of contact in the early fourth century, at a time when the British schools of craftsmen were beginning to develop their own distinct styles in the service of their artistic patrons (Cunliffe 1990b).

The archaeological evidence for contact along the Atlantic sea routes in the period from the fifth to the second century, though not extensive, usefully augments the tantalizing accounts provided by the classical texts. The impression given is that trade was organized and that certain locations had emerged as ports-of-trade where commodities could be exchanged in safety. Ictis is the only named place, but in all probability a number of coastal locations in the south-west had by now developed trading connections. Mount Batten is the best attested archaeologically but others suggest themselves. At Exeter, for example, a surprisingly large number of Mediterranean coins have been found which *may* reflect pre-Roman trade. More certainty attaches to Methyr Mawr Warren, at the mouth of the rivers Ogmore and Ewenny in South Wales, where a range of material including La Tène brooches and evidence for metalworking indicates a settlement of some importance. The site is well located to be a port articulating with the metal-producing areas of south Wales. Somewhere in the vicinity two bronze helmets were found in 1808 (now lost). Jope suggests that they may have been Italo-Celtic imports of the fourth century BC. Uncertainty remains but such finds would be consistent with Methyr Mawr Warren being a major entry port (Jope 2000, 228; Toft 2001).



Figure 17.23 *Bronze figurine from Aust, Avon (actual height: 146 mm) (photograph: British Museum).*

Sites such as these may well have taken on a more than local significance at times when the Atlantic route was being actively exploited.

Trade in the first century BC and early first century AD

After the beginning of the first century BC evidence for trade and exchange with the Continent increases dramatically. This is amply demonstrated by a wide range of imports including Gallo- Belgic and

Armorican coins, north-western French pottery, Italian and Spanish amphorae, bronze and silver tableware from Italy and a number of other luxury commodities. In addition to actual imports, rapid style change in the pottery of the south-east and the appearance of large numbers of fibulae modelled on La Tène III types in circulation on the Continent show that Britain and the adjacent parts of Europe were now in close and continuous contact. What we are seeing is essentially the bow-wave effect in advance of the increasing Romanization of Gaul. To understand it something must be said of events on the Continent.

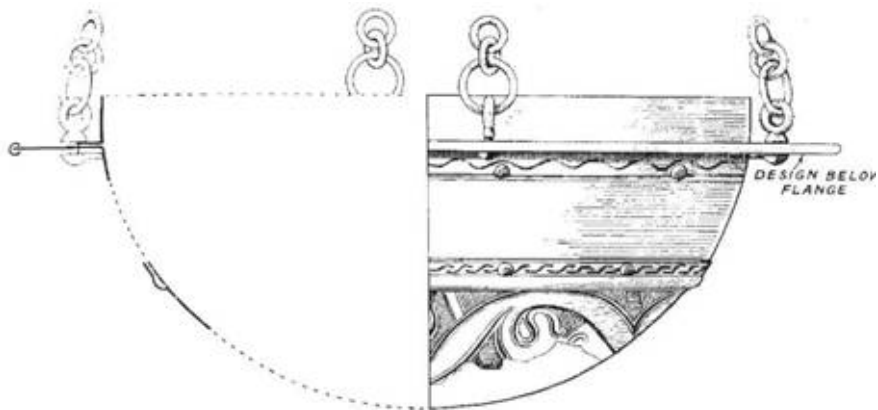


FIG. 1. Elevation and section of bronze bowl from Denbighshire (1).



Figure 17.24 Bronze vessel from Cerrig y Drudion, Clwyd. The original drawing (reproduced here from Smith 1926) shows the find reconstructed as a hanging bowl. It is now thought to be parts of one or more lids. Actual maximum diameter of flange 26 cm.

In the latter part of the second century BC Rome was increasingly drawn into the affairs of southern France in response to pleas from the Greek cities of the Mediterranean coast for military support against the aggressive attentions of neighbouring hill tribes. By the 120s events had become so serious that the Roman authorities decided that the only solution was to station a legion at *Aquae Sextiae* (Aix-en-Provence). In this way the Romanization of Gaul formally began and Roman entrepreneurs poured in, bent on exploiting the new commercial opportunities which occupation provided. In 118 BC a colony was founded at *Narbo Martius* (Narbonne), greatly facilitating access to the new markets. For the next sixty years or so the province of Transalpine, as it was known, was thronged with merchants trading with the barbarian Gauls beyond the frontier. Enormous quantities of Italian wine, and no doubt other consumer goods, were exchanged for slaves and raw materials, particularly metals (Tchernia 1983; Cunliffe 1988a, 80–92). The sudden development of this market invigorated the traditional trading routes, particularly the Atlantic route along the western coast of France to southern Britain.

In 59 BC Roman involvement in Gaul entered a new phase when Julius Caesar began a war of conquest against the Gauls which was to last for almost a decade. By the time it was over the political geography of Europe had changed out of all recognition. Rome had now established a somewhat shaky control over a vast territory of what is now France, Belgium and parts of Holland up to the river Rhine. This new reality, and the fact that Caesar had campaigned in Britain in 55 and 54 BC, where he had negotiated treaties with the tribes of eastern Britain, brought about a reorientation of trade with the island. While the old Atlantic route still continued to function, trade was on a drastically reduced scale: it was the coastal tribes of eastern Britain who were now in the forefront of commerce.

By about 10 BC Gaul had become thoroughly stabilized. From this time onwards the Rhine frontier, and the route via the Rhône leading to it, became a 'commercial corridor' – a zone of production, consumption and transshipment linking the Thames estuary to the Mediterranean. The effects of all this on the tribes of south-eastern Britain can be clearly recognized as quantities of comparatively low-value goods, such as pottery, manufactured in the commercial corridor, began to pour in.

It is against this broader background that the pattern of imports enjoyed by Britain from about 100 BC until the Roman Conquest must be assessed.

The effects of the reinvigoration of the Atlantic route, following the foundation of the Roman province of Transalpine, can best be seen at

Hengistbury Head, Dorset (Figure 17.25). The headland, a dominant feature of the Solent coast, protects the sheltered expanse of Christchurch harbour from the predominant south-west winds and currents, thus providing an attractive anchorage for shipping (Figures 8.5). Not only this, the site was also admirably located at the hub of a natural route network which linked the productive hinterland of Wessex (via the rivers Stour and Avon), to the land-hugging south coast routes and the favoured cross-Channel passage, via the Channel Islands, to the ports of the Côtes-d'Armor and beyond (McGrail 1983; Cunliffe and de Jersey 1998). Excavation has shown the existence of a substantial settlement along the protected northern shore, producing a wide range of imported goods including quantities of Italian Dressel 1A amphorae, lumps of raw purple and yellow glass, figs, and masses of pottery from Brittany including elegant black cordoned wares, graphite-coated wares and rilled vessels made in a micaceous fabric (Figures 17.26 and A:33). There can be little doubt that in the first half of the first century BC Hengistbury was receiving cargoes of merchandise made up of goods amassed at various points along the 1,600 km route which led from northern Italy, via Narbonne, through the Carcassonne Gap and the Garonne/Gironde, along the Atlantic coast of France and around Brittany to the Solent shore. In return the merchants at Hengistbury were collecting together an impressive range of exports. Local products included iron, Kimmeridge shale and salt; grain came from the Wessex chalk-land, while metals including gold, silver, copper, tin and lead were gathered as ore, ingots and scrap from the Mendips, the south-western peninsula and elsewhere for refinement, and perhaps manufacture, before export. All these commodities are attested in the archaeological record but many more were probably involved. When, a few decades later, Strabo listed the principal exports from Britain, he included 'grain, cattle, gold, silver and iron... also hides, and slaves and dogs that are by nature suited to the purposes of the chase' (*Geog.* 4.5.2). His list gives some idea of significant local products which are archaeologically invisible.

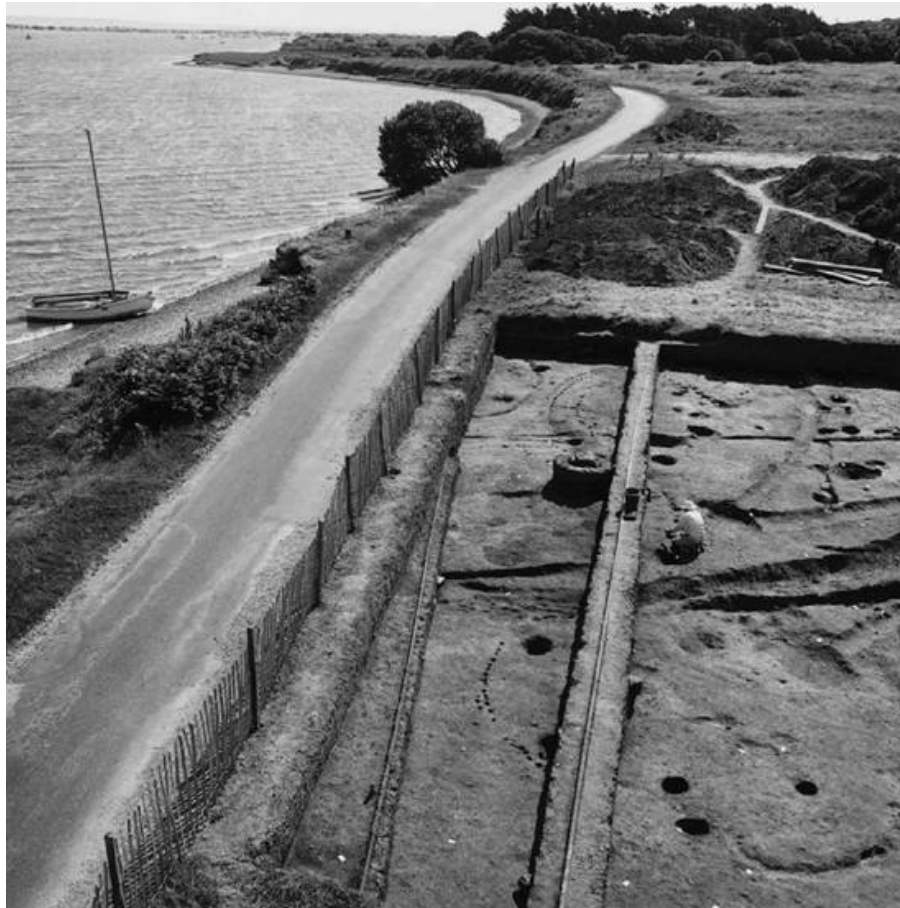


Figure 17.25 Hengistbury Head, Dorset. The excavation of the Late Iron Age port on the shore of the harbour (photograph: author).

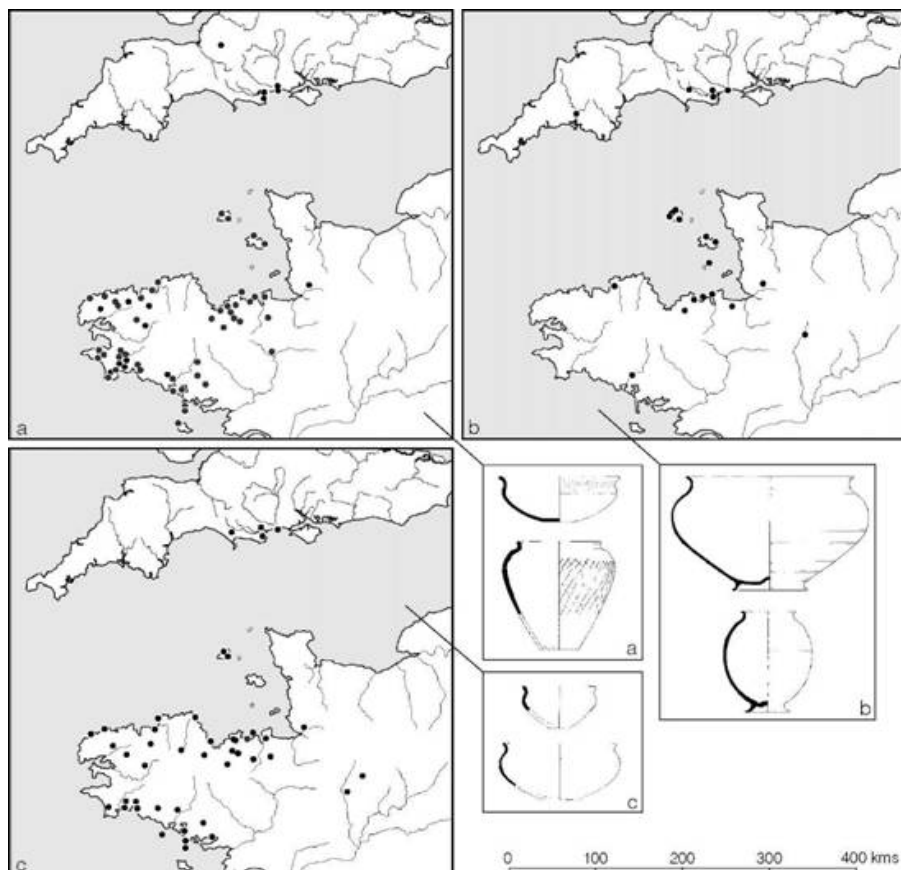


Figure 17.26 *Distribution of Late Iron Age pottery made in Brittany (source: Cunliffe and de Jersey 1997).*

Although Hengistbury was clearly a major focus of trade, it may not have been the only one in the area. Poole Harbour, nearby, has produced a comparable range of imports, especially from Green Island and Hamworthy, from both of which have come Italian Dressel 1A amphorae and north-western French pottery. An impressive array of Mediterranean coinage has also been found in the vicinity (Cunliffe 1982a, figure 3). The discovery of two substantial jetties, dating to the second century BC, leading out into deep water from Green Island and the adjacent mainland shows that the local community was investing much effort in its maritime infrastructure. With ease of access to salt and Kimmeridge shale and with a convenient route, via the river Frome, deep into Durotrigan territory, Poole Harbour has obvious attractions as a trading focus. We might therefore regard the two harbours as integral elements in a single contact zone. Further to the

west the Isle of Portland commanding Weymouth Bay may also have served as a centre for articulating local exchanges (Taylor 2001).

From this Solent contact zone imports were distributed to the hinterland. French pottery (and its contents?) barely got as far as 10 km from the ports, amphorae were found further inland up to 50–60 km, while coins of the Armorican tribes, particularly the Coriosolites but also the Baio- casses, Redones, Unelli and Osismii, reached much further (and may anyway have arrived by a variety of routes) (Cunliffe and de Jersey 1998, 72–103). Of the British commodities needed for export, metals from the south-west would have come by sea while the lead/silver alloy from the Mendips was probably brought via the Stour valley route (Figure 17.27).

The dense distribution of Dressel 1A amphorae in Armorica (Figure 17.28), the presence of Armorican pottery and coins in the British contact zone and the occurrence of Kimmeridge shale bracelets in Brittany are sufficient to show that the tribes of Armorica were intimately bound up in the trading system. Caesar discovered this, and writing of them says

the Veneti are by far the strongest. They have a great many ships and regularly sail to and from Britain. When it comes to knowledge and experience of navigation, they leave all the other tribes standing... They are able to extract tolls from almost all who regularly use those waters.

(BG iii, 8)

It is curious that in Britain Venetic coins are extremely rare while those of the Coriosolites, from the Côtes-d'Armor, are far more common. One possible explanation for this is that the Veneti were the receivers of the Atlantic cargoes coming from the south, and were thus well known to Roman traders, while the final leg of the journey from Brittany to Britain was under the control of the Coriosolites. If so it might imply a vigorous cross-peninsula trade from the south coast of Armorica to the north.

Exactly how the process of cross-Channel trade was articulated it is difficult to say but the exceptionally large quantity of Armorican pottery at the port of Hengistbury hints at the possibility of a significant presence of Armoricans. One possibility, therefore, is that Armoricans actually lived at Hengistbury during the summer months when the trading enterprises were under way and were visited there by Britons bringing products from various parts of central southern and south-western Britain. Once it had become known that traders would be present for a fixed period every year it is easy to see how a momentum would build up.

A trading network as complex as this could not have survived

Caesar's devastating attack on the Armorican tribes in 56 BC and the evidence from Hengistbury bears witness to this. The importation of French pottery virtually ceases and amphorae which can be dated with some certainty to the second half of the first century BC occur in negligible quantities. A few Dressel 1B types show that a little Italian wine was arriving and occasional examples of Dressel 1/Pascual 1 reflect the growing importance of the Tarragona region of Spain as a supplier, but even together the quantity represents only a fraction of that which had previously arrived in Dressel 1A amphorae. While the chronology of these vessels is not precise, the evidence from Hengistbury clearly shows a marked decline in wine importation after the mid-first century BC (Cunliffe 1987). In Poole Harbour, however, that some level of cross-Channel contact was maintained is shown by imported pottery of the late first century BC and early first century AD (Cox and Hearne 1991, 114–22).

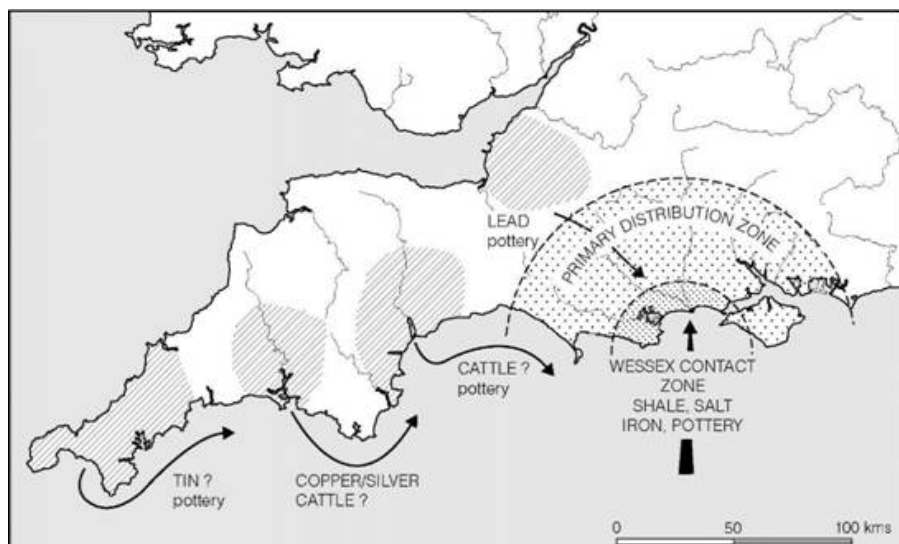


Figure 17.27 Model for trade with Hengistbury (source: Cunliffe 1982a).

Direct archaeological evidence of Iron Age shipping around the shores of Britain is slight, but a complete iron anchor together with a length of chain was discovered in a hoard at Bulbury, Dorset, together with other material suggesting a date in the first half of the first century BC (Figure 17.29). Although the anchor may have come from an Armorican ship (Cunliffe 1972b) its form suggests that it is more likely to have been of Roman origin. More recently a lead anchor stock of Greco-Roman type was found by divers off the coast of north-west Wales, near Porth Felen (Figure 17.29). Typological

considerations indicate a date in the second or first century BC (Boon 1976). These two anchors provide an interesting hint of the type of Mediterranean shipping with which the inhabitants of pre-Roman Britain may well have been familiar.

The Porth Felen anchor is a reminder that some foreign vessels were now penetrating along the Atlantic seaways. In this context we may note what is evidently a beach port at Meols on the Wirrall peninsula which apparently served as a landing place for trading vessels over a long period of time. Among the collection of unstratified material recovered from the site were three Carthaginian and two Coriosolites coins which suggest that the landing may have originated in the latter part of the Iron Age (Matthews 1999).

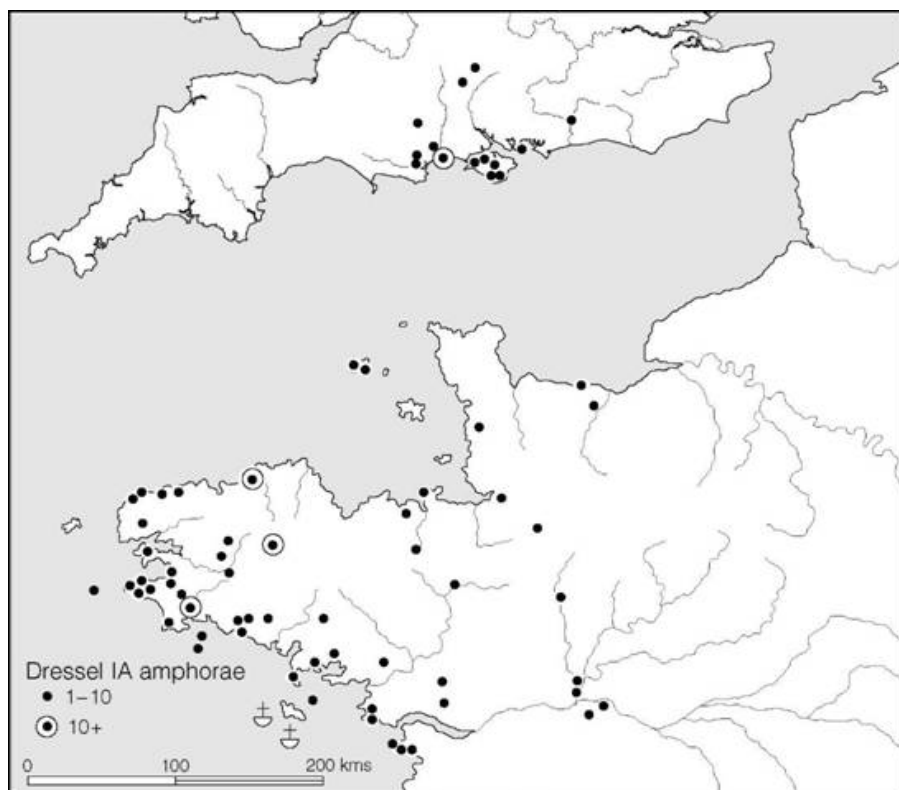


Figure 17.28 *Distribution of Dressel 1A amphorae in Brittany and southern Britain (source: Cunliffe 1987 after Galliou 1982 and with additions).*

In the last hundred years before the Claudian conquest, the tribes of south-eastern Britain seem to have developed a lively trade with Roman Gaul. Throughout the second half of the first century BC,

Italian wine was imported in large quantities (as the widespread occurrence of Dressel type 1B amphorae shows) (Figure 17.30), and along with the wine came the tableware appropriate to its consumption. Bronze jugs (oenochoe) and bronze patellae, found in the burials at Aylesford and Welwyn, were imported from the Ornavasso region of northern Italy some time between 50 and 10 BC, while silver cups of Augustan date were brought in, eventually to be buried with dead chieftains at Welwyn and Welwyn Garden City. Bronze bowls and wine- strainers, probably of Gaulish or Italian manufacture, were also introduced. The forty years or so following Caesar's conquest of Gaul saw the tribes of south-eastern Britain develop in parallel with their neighbours in Belgic Gaul who were now under Roman authority. Exchange was probably still manipulated through traditional mechanisms embedded in the social systems of the two areas (Cunliffe 1988a, 137–44), but with the more rigid control of Gaul and the development of the Rhine 'corridor' the old order gave way to a new commercialism.

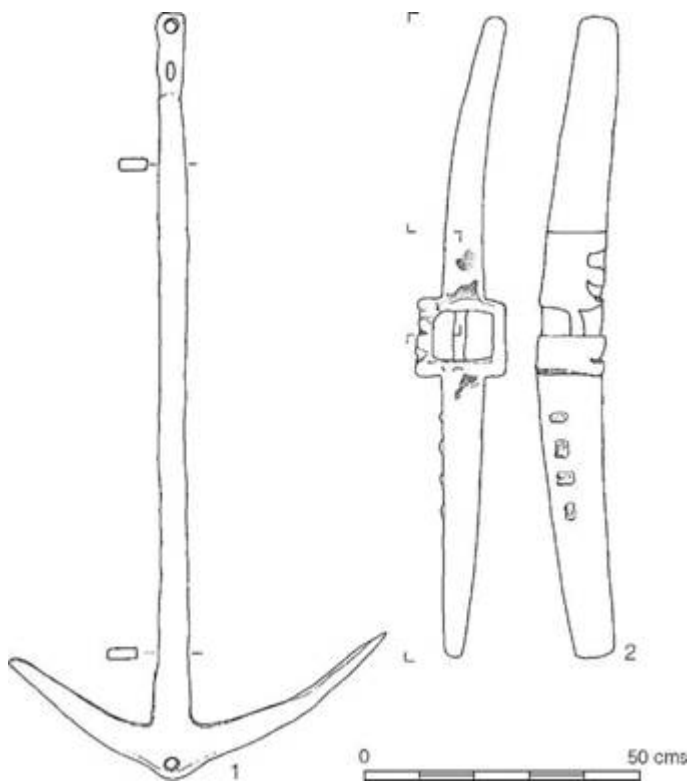


Figure 17.29 Anchors from Britain: 1 iron anchor from Bulbury, Dorset; 2 lead anchor stock dredged up from near Porth Felen, Aberdaron (sources: 1 Cunliffe 1972b; 2 Boon 1977).

From about 10 BC until the Conquest of AD 43 the volume of trade seems to have increased. Fine Gallo-Belgic tablewares were being imported in quantity, together with smaller consignments of Arretine vessels made in northern Italy: later, samian ware from southern Gaul reached Britain. A limited number of glass vessels also made an appearance at this time. Wine too continued to be imported in bulk, as well as increasing quantities of fish sauce and olive oil from the Spanish province of Baetica, the two delicacies arriving in characteristic amphorae (Peacock 1971, 1984). In addition to food, wine and tableware, other luxury goods appeared, like the pairs of silver fibulae from Great Chesterford and elsewhere (Stead 1976a), the set of glass gaming pieces from the burial at Welwyn Garden City and the small medallion of the Emperor Augustus found in the tumulus burial at Lexden – the latter surely a diplomatic gift of some kind. In fact, in the few generations before the conquest, the wealthy members of south-eastern British society must have been able to enjoy much the same range of Roman consumer luxuries as their distant relations now living across the Channel in Roman Gaul.

While some of the imported commodities may have represented gifts used to establish and maintain diplomatic relationships there can be little doubt that regular trade was now under way on a large scale. Among the British exports corn and other raw materials would have featured large, but manpower, in the form of slaves, was always a desirable commodity in the Roman markets. In this context we might note the slave chains found at Bigbury, Lords Bridge and Llyn Cerrig Bach (Thompson 1994).

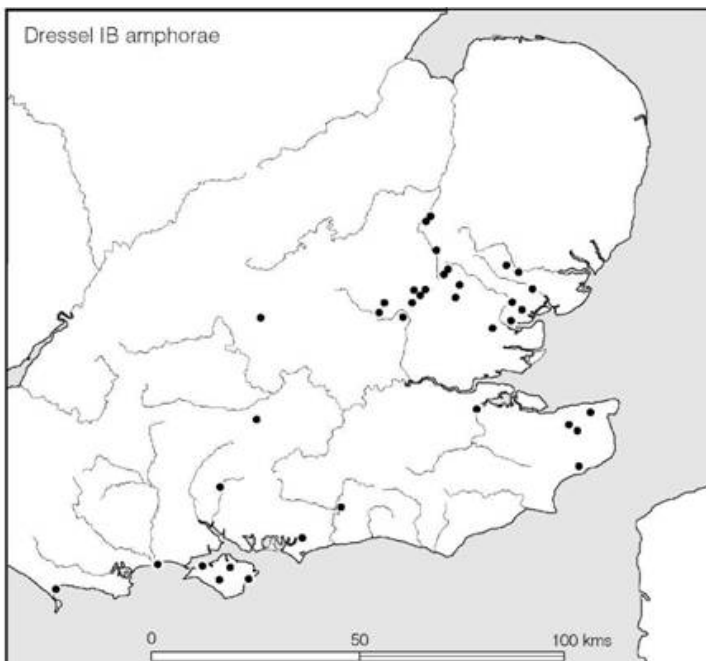


Figure 17.30 Distribution of Dressel 1B amphorae in eastern Britain (source: Fitzpatrick 1985a with additions).

Some insight into this flow of commodities is provided by a telling passage written by Strabo at the turn of the millennium, ‘Some of the chieftains’, he writes,

after procuring the friendship of Caesar Augustus... have managed to make the whole of the island virtually Roman property. Further, they submit so easily to heavy duties, both on the exports from there to Celtica and on the imports from Celtica (these latter are ivory chains and necklaces, and amber-gems and glass vessels and other pretty wares of that sort) that there is no need of garrisoning the island.

(Geog. 4.5.3)

A few decades after these words were written the Roman legions landed in Kent.

Summary of Continental contacts from the seventh century BC to the first century AD

Standing back from the mass of evidence briefly surveyed in the

foregoing pages, it is possible to make a number of broad generalizations. From the eighth century until the middle of the fourth it would seem that the British Isles maintained vigorous trading contacts with the Continent, demonstrated by the appearance in these islands of a large number of metal types ranging from personal ornaments like pins and bracelets to swords and horse-harness fittings. Much of this exotic material is of central and north European origin, but the long-established trade routes along the Atlantic coasts of France and Iberia (leading ultimately to the Mediterranean) continued to be used, particularly by the traders distributing bronze weapons and tools manufactured in the local Atlantic Bronze Age styles. Imported types did not, however, materially alter the traditional range of weapon- and tool-types although many of the new ideas were adopted and rapidly modified by the British craftsmen.

The appearance in the eighth century of imported Hallstatt C swords together with harness- and cart-fittings was once thought to imply an incursion of a mobile, horse-riding aristocracy from Continental Europe, but no positive trace of a large-scale folk movement into Britain survives, and the virtual absence of the characteristic Hallstatt burial rite in Britain argues that no such movement took place. Indeed swords and horse-trappings were already being imported in the preceding period. The general picture to emerge is therefore of a broadly parallel development between Britain and the Continent, the two areas retaining a close contact, which encouraged a free flow of ideas and an exchange of goods, while indigenous traditions remained dominant.

This pattern was maintained throughout the fifth and fourth centuries, allowing the importation of luxury objects such as daggers and swords, by means of which elements of the contemporary Continental art styles first appeared in Britain. Along with the more valuable types came a scattering of trinkets including fibulae, bracelets and occasionally rings. Throughout this period the Atlantic trade routes to and from south-western Britain were maintained, the principal export being Cornish tin for the Mediterranean world. Occasional references to the tin trade in classical literature suggest that the system was well established and flourishing. No doubt equally complex trading patterns linked the south-east of the country to mainland Europe.

Some time just before 400 BC it seems probable that a group of people migrated from France to eastern Yorkshire, establishing a community which maintained its identity until, and even after, the Roman invasion. Apart from this one possible instance, there is no evidence to support the idea of a widespread invasion.

The material culture and settlement pattern of the third and second

centuries suggest that Continental contact decreased during this period, allowing the British communities to assume an intensely regional aspect reflecting little of contemporary European developments. Contact was reintensified about 100 BC when the activities of the Roman entrepreneurs in southern Gaul impinged upon the Solent harbours and the south-west and bound these areas closely once more in an Atlantic trading network. But after Caesar's conquest of Gaul this trade rapidly declined, to be replaced by even more intensive contacts between the Roman world and the pro-Roman tribes of eastern Britain. This system was subsumed when Rome invaded Britain in AD 43.

18

Craft, production and art

The manufacture and distribution of consumer goods in Iron Age Britain was a complex process involving production and exchange on several different levels. Beneath the all-embracing pattern imposed by overseas networks, which remained a significant factor throughout, there lay two systems of no lesser importance: specialist localized production, with its own limited spheres of distribution, and home production geared to the needs of the immediate kin group. The latter satisfied the bulk of the population's needs.

Home industries: wool, linen, leather, carpentry and basketry (Figures 18.1 and 18.2)

One of the most widely practised of the home crafts was the manufacture of textiles, which seems to have been carried out in most parts of the British Isles, presumably on a part-time basis within each household. Of the various fibres which could have been used wool was probably the most common. Exactly how the fleece was removed from the sheep is a matter of some debate, in view of the absence of shears in all but the very latest Iron Age deposits. If shearing was necessary a sharp iron knife would have been adequate but it is more likely that sheep were plucked either by hand or with the aid of objects commonly known as weaving combs. After cleaning, the wool would have been combed, probably with bone and antler combs, and then spun into yarn on a simple hand-spindle weighted with a whorl of stone or baked clay. It was probably at this stage that dyeing was undertaken, using vegetable dyes.

Flax was also used to make linen. This would have required the harvesting of the crop in July or August before the seeds were fully ripened, at which time the fibre was at its best. Retting pits, where the flax stems were soaked, have been found in some number in the Late Bronze Age settlement at Reading Business Park in the Kennet valley. Nettle also produces a good fibre which might also have been used in fabric making.

The nature of the loom used in Britain is still a matter of uncertainty but in all probability it was of the upright warp-weighted type. No archaeological trace of such a structure survives in this country, with the exception of the loom weights of clay and stone used for keeping bunches of warp threads taut and of even tension. Some simple machinery would have been used for shedding, i.e. parting the warp threads to allow the weft to be woven through – a process probably carried out with a shuttle of wood which may have been provided with a tip made from a pointed metapodial or tibia bone. The tamping down of the weft could most efficiently have been carried out with a wooden sword, although comb beaters (i.e. weaving combs) or pin beaters, in the form of hafted bone points, may sometimes have been used.

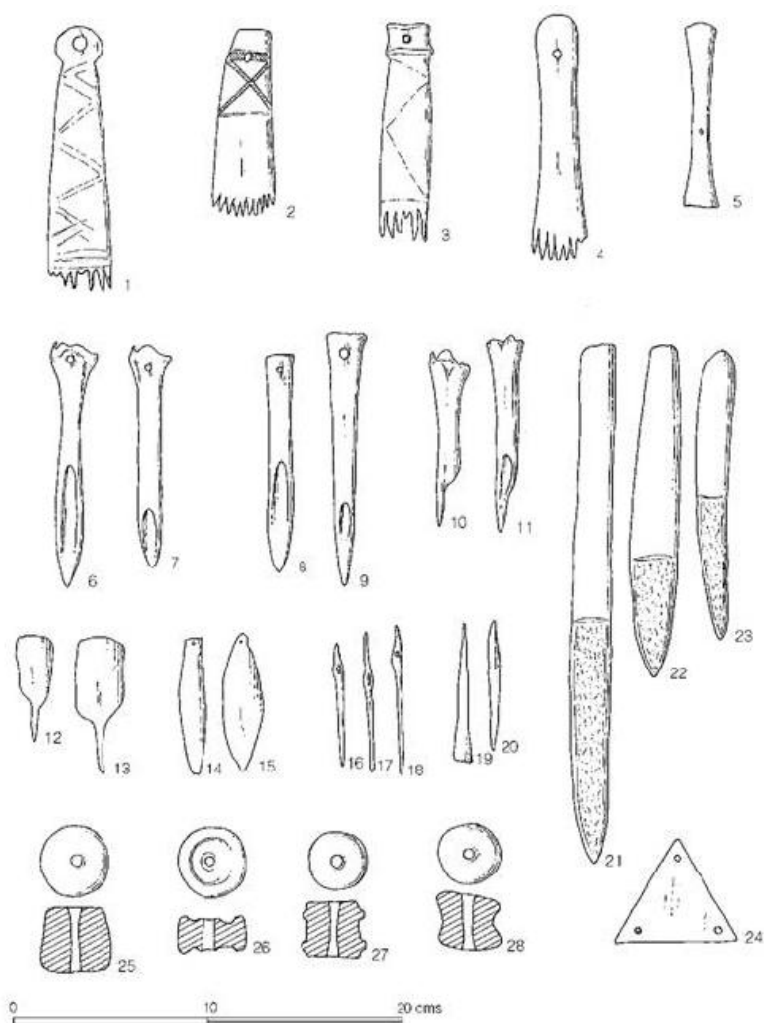


Figure 18.1 Bone and ceramic equipment connected with spinning, weaving and the preparation of skins: 1–23, 25–8 All Cannings Cross, Wilts.; 24 Wookey Hole, Somerset (sources: All Cannings Cross, M.E. Cunningham 1923; Wookey Hole, Balch 1914).



Figure 18.2 Antler weaving combs from Danebury, Hants (scale: $\frac{1}{2}$) (photograph: Institute of Archaeology, Oxford. Danebury Trust).

For the manufacture of braids, tablet weaving may have been practised. This is a method which requires the use of bone or wood plates perforated with two or more holes close to the edge to control the positioning and spacing of the warp. The technique was widely used in Scandinavia during the pre-Roman Iron Age and also during the Roman period in Britain, but the only indisputable evidence of earlier use in this country is a group of triangular weaving tablets found in Iron Age contexts at Wookey Hole, Somerset. In spite of the lack of direct archaeological evidence the process was probably common.

The more durable artefacts connected with spinning and weaving are found over much of the country throughout the pre-Roman Iron Age, and many of the basic types can be traced back into the second millennium. A weaving comb (or a plucking comb) is known in a Middle to Late Bronze Age context at Shearplace Hill, Dorset, and functionally similar objects made of antler are found in Neolithic contexts. Similarly, loom weights of cylindrical form made from baked clay are a recurring component of Middle to Late Bronze Age assemblages, and the type continues into the Iron Age, eventually to be replaced by the more characteristic triangular variety. Even the bone threading points are sporadically found in pre-Iron Age contexts.

There can therefore be little doubt that the manufacture of woollen cloth was an old-established craft in Britain and, to judge by the dense distribution of artefacts concerned with spinning and weaving, most households were geared to supplying their own requirements.

The weaving of organic materials other than wool and flax would have been equally widely practised, although little evidence survives today. Basketry is implied by the impressions of basket-work on a pot from Dun Croc a Comhdhalach, on North Uist, and some kind of matting made from rushes was found in a pit at Worlebury, Somerset. These few survivals do scant justice to the fact that basket-making and matting must have been common occupations during the prehistoric period, particularly in those areas in which pottery was scarce. Another occupation, the production of fishing-nets, would presumably have been carried out on a large scale, but apart from a few netting needles and lead and stone net weights no trace survives.

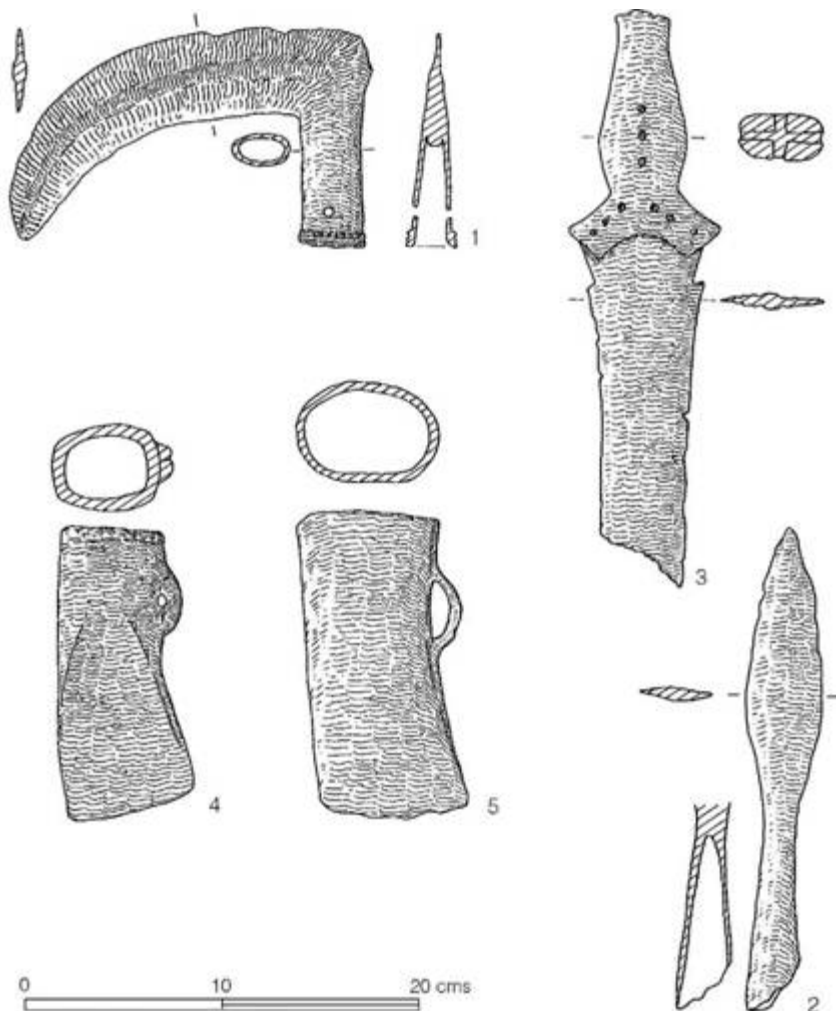


Figure 18.3 *Early types of iron weapons and implements: 1-3 sickle, spear and sword from Llyn Fawr, Glam.; 4 axe from Walthamstow, Essex; 5 axe from Cold Kitchen Hill, Wilts. (sources: Llyn Fawr, Grimes 1951; Walthamstow, R.A. Smith 1925; Cold Kitchen Hill, author).*

Leather-working was of no less importance to the community than the production of woollen fabrics. The manufacture of a serviceable leather garment or container would have involved three separate stages: first the removal and cleaning of the skin, then tanning, and finally the making up of the finished article. These processes can be expected to leave little archaeological trace but general purpose iron knives would have been quite sufficient for skinning and cutting, while the stretching out of the pelt would probably have involved the use of wooden or bone pegs. Fatty substances rising gradually to the surface were scraped off, possibly with the use of the rib-knives (ribs thinned down to give a good scraping edge) frequently found on Early Iron Age occupation sites or with metal knives, while the removal of the hair was probably undertaken using a comb or scraper. The actual process of tanning could have been carried out in vats or in specially lined pits, using preparations containing oak bark and oak galls as the principal sources of tannin. The elder Pliny mentions the importance of the trade in oak galls for this purpose in the first century BC, and indeed a small quantity of galls were found in a pit of the second century BC at Chalton, Hants, suggesting their deliberate collection. At present this is the only evidence for what can hardly be doubted to have been a process commonly practised throughout the period. Finally, the manufacture of the finished articles would have required only iron knives and bone needles, both of which are commonly found in domestic contexts.

While clothing and harness would have been the principal leather goods to be manufactured, containers must have been made for use alongside, or instead of, ceramics. At times when livestock had to be driven to distant pastures leather vessels would have been far more practical than pottery. Indeed, it is possible to see in the decoration of some of the Middle Iron Age pottery in Hampshire what might well be a skeuomorphic representation of stitching, the diagonal lines representing the thread, the shallow dots being the needle holes (Figure A:16). Moreover, the form of the saucepan pot is more naturally produced in wood, leather-work or bark-work than in a ceramic medium. In areas with little pottery, leather and wood would have served instead of ceramics. The use of leather containers is likely to have been more widespread than we can ever hope to demonstrate but a remarkable find from Beeston Castle, Cheshire, of an elaborate rim binding and handle made in bronze, evidently from a leather

drinking vessel, provides a tantalizing insight into the fine leatherwork that may once have been widely in use.

Other home crafts would have included hurdle-making and carpentry. Little is known of hurdle-work, although it must have been widespread, but there is now growing evidence for the use of wattle as a common walling material for houses. Some storage pits may also have been wicker lined, but only at Dane's Camp, Poxwell, and Worlebury has such a lining been recognized. The tools required by the hurdle-maker would have been limited to the saw, bill hook and knife. It is possible that the small curved 'reaping hook' may also have been used to trim leaves off branches and to split withies. Some indication of the finished product is provided by the hurdles found preserved at Glastonbury in a second- or first-century context. The demand for suitable timber for this work could only have been met by the proper management of woodland, which would have entailed the pollarding of willows and coppicing of hazel.

Skilled carpentry was widespread. Carpenters' tools including saws, axes, adzes, chisels and gouges are fairly common (Fell 1997, 1998; Fell and Salter 1998), and intimate knowledge of the properties of timber is implied by the complex nature of some of the earliest houses like West Brandon, Co. Durham, Little Woodbury, Wilts., and Pimperne Down, Dorset.

The collection of well-preserved wood from Glastonbury and from the pond in the Breiddin hillfort gives an idea of the wide range of domestic objects manufactured, including small wooden vessels, often with incised decoration, ladles, handles for iron tools, mallets, ladders and frameworks for furniture or looms ([Figure 18.4](#)) (Earwood 1988; Mussen 1991, 161–72).

Among the more specialized products of the carpenter were wheeled vehicles. The skill of the vehicle maker is vividly demonstrated by the traces of chariots found as soil marks in the Arras burials in Yorkshire ([Figure 20.4](#)). Well-preserved spoked wheels of this kind have been found at Holme Pierrepont, Notts., in a second-century BC context (Musty and MacCormick 1973), and at the Roman fort of Newstead, Scotland, dating to the first century BC. The Holme Pierrepont wheel demonstrates a high level of technical accomplishment. The felloe (outer rim) was made of six segments in ash joined together with dowels of oak and two oak spokes were attached to each. The hub was made of birch. The iron tyre, which held the structure rigid was shrunk on; that is, it was heated and dropped over the wooden structure. On cooling the iron hoop would contract, drawing the component parts tightly together. No doubt skilled wheelwrights were present in many communities. That solid wheels were also in use, presumably for more mundane farm carts, is

shown by discoveries of solid tripartite wheels from early first millennium contexts at Flag Fen, Northants, and Lingwood, Cambs.

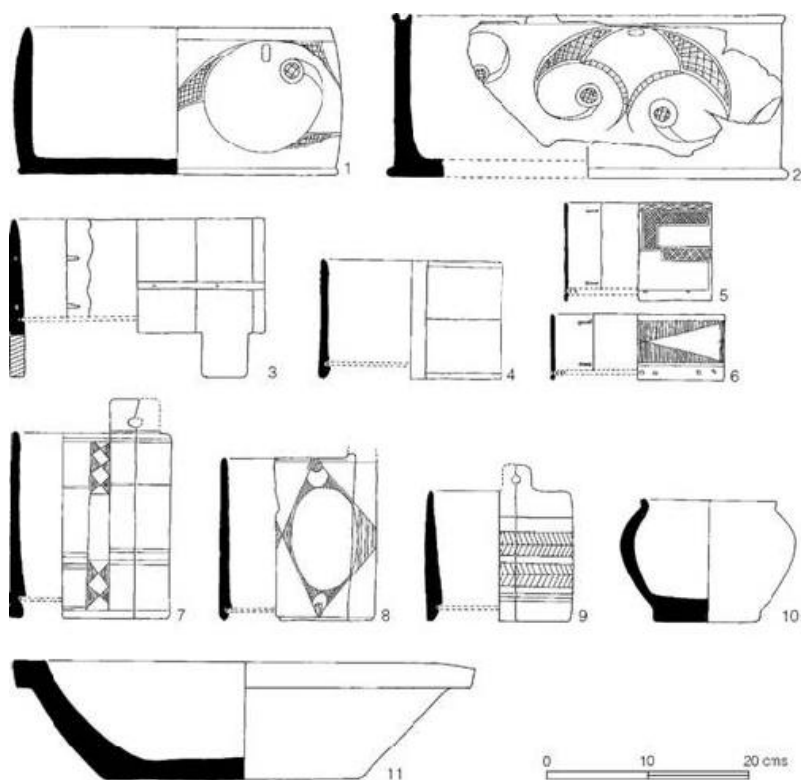


Figure 18.4 *Wooden containers from Glastonbury Lake Village, Somerset, 1–9 (source: Earwood 1988) and the Breiddin, Powys, 10–11 (source: Musson 1991).*

Boat building, too, must have been widely practised. Sewn plank-built vessels are well attested in British estuaries in the second and early first millennia BC. The famous Ferriby boat, radiocarbon dated to about 2000 BC, is the earliest. The Dover boat dates to later in the second millennium, with the vessel from the Caldicot Levels, Gwent, on the Severn estuary coming later, early in the first millennium (Parry and McGrail 1991, 1994). Whether or not these vessels were regularly used on the open sea is debatable but, at the very least, they demonstrate highly developed boat-building skills. For the later period Caesar's accounts of the sturdy Venetic ships built to contend with the rough seas of the Bay of Biscay and the English Channel provide an invaluable insight into the kind of craft that might be expected to have been constructed by the coastal communities. Archaeological evidence for Iron Age sea-going ships is at present wanting except for

the iron anchor found with a hoard of metalwork at Bulbury, Dorset, but in all probability robust vessels of Venetic type were widely in use in the waters around Britain. The tradition continued into the Roman period. Examples of three Romano-Celtic vessels, as they are called, are known from Blackfriars in London, St Peter Port in Guernsey and Barlands Farm near Newport.

The classical sources also refer to skin boats plying the Channel (Pliny, *NH* VII, 57). These would have been constructed of hides stretched over a wicker framework – a tradition which survives today in the currachs of the west coast of Ireland where tarred canvas is now used instead of animal skins. Such vessels would have been flimsy and it is hardly surprising that no trace has yet been found of one in archaeological deposits.

Evidence for the navigation of inland waterways is more plentiful. A number of log boats have been found close to rivers. Most are without context, but those from Shapwick, Somerset, Poole, Dorset, and Holme Pierrepont, Notts., can, with some assurance, be dated to the Iron Age (McGrail and Switzer 1975). In 1984 a finely preserved log boat was discovered at Hasholme on Holme-on-Spalding Moor in East Yorkshire and subsequently excavated and studied with care (Millett and McGrail 1988). The boat ([Figures 18.5 and 18.6](#)) was constructed from an oak trunk more than 12 m in length which was cut in 323 BC (according to the dendrochronological study). It was a sophisticated structure with a fitted transom, extended bow, wash strake, beam ties and transverse timbers. Estimates of performance suggest that it would have been able to carry a load of over 5.5 tonnes in as little as 75 cm of water. It was neither fast nor sufficiently stable to put out to sea but it would have been ideally suited to the transport of men or cargo in the local rivers as far as the middle reaches of the estuary (McGrail 1988). A second, even larger, vessel of similar construction was discovered and destroyed without being recorded in the 1960s at South Carr Farm, Newport, only 3 km from Hasholme (Halkon 1997b). An even more complex structure was found at Brigg in north Lincolnshire ([Figure 18.7](#)). When originally exposed it was considered to be a raft, but its system of luting, with complicated cleats and transverse timbers, is now thought to be consistent with it being the remains of a flat-bottomed boat. Radiocarbon estimates suggest a date in the second quarter of the first millennium BC (McGrail 1975, 1994).

Though fragmentary, the remains of boats from Iron Age Britain and their remarkable precursors at Ferriby on the Humber estuary and Caldicot on the Severn leave little doubt that boat building was a long-established craft.



Figure 18.5 *The Hasholme boat during excavation (photograph: Sean McGrail).*

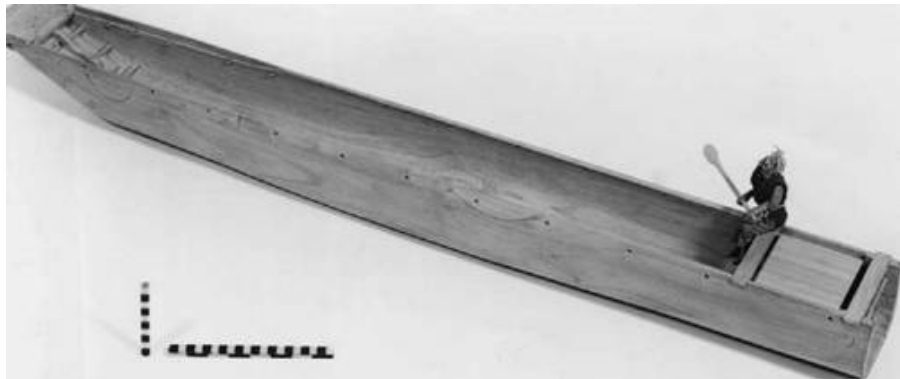


Figure 18.6 *Model of the Hasholme boat (photograph: Sean McGrail).*

Ironworking

The home crafts referred to so far could have all been practised using material locally available, the collection of which would have been a simple matter. Iron-smithing, on the other hand, involved more complex mechanisms, for while most areas of Britain lay within relatively easy reach of iron deposits, some element of specialist knowledge would necessarily have been involved in its extraction.

The discovery at Llyn Fawr, Glam., of an iron sickle made in close imitation of a native bronze prototype establishes beyond reasonable doubt that iron products were being manufactured in Britain probably as early as the seventh century (Figure 18.3, no. 1). This is not the only evidence: at Sheepen Hill (Colchester), Essex, a cauldron of the early seventh century was found, together with a small iron stud (Hawkes and Smith 1957, 161), and the Sompington hoard from Sussex, also of the seventh century, contained a mass of corroded iron of undistinguishable form. Iron, then, was a component of some seventh-century hoards and the Llyn Fawr sickle shows that competent local blacksmiths were already at work. The change-over from the common use of bronze to iron must have been gradual, and it is only to be expected that to begin with old bronze types were copied in the new metal. The single-looped socketed axe made in iron appears on a number of sites as far apart as Scotland, the Berwyn Mountains, Cold Kitchen Hill, Wilts., and Walthamstow, Essex (Figure 18.3, nos. 4 and 5), but in no case has such an implement been found in a stratified context (Manning and Saunders 1972). It might, however, be relevant that the Cold Kitchen Hill axe came from a site producing quantities of pottery of eighth- to seventh- century date.

How extensively iron was used in the seventh, sixth or even fifth century is impossible to say. The survival of Late Bronze Age types on

several Iron Age sites suggests that its introduction was gradual and that old traditions lingered for centuries. Indeed, it may not have been until the fourth to third centuries that the metal began to come into use on any scale (Manning 1972).

Smelting and forging seem generally to have been carried out at the homestead. Several examples serve to emphasize the point. Within the small defended enclosure of Bryn y Castell, Ffestiniog, north Wales, two bowl furnaces were found associated with extensive slag deposits and other smithing debris concentrated at the southern end of the enclosure. One was built in a shallow pit cut into the bedrock. The surviving walls show that it would have been little more than 20 cm high and thus of limited capacity. The other was more complex, having been rebuilt on at least two occasions. The first was oval in shape, 20 cm by 30 cm with walls of stony clay. The associated debris suggested that the furnace had probably been used to reheat raw blooms during the early stage of the smithing process. Similar deposits were found in the subsequent rebuildings. The dates associated with this activity belong in the first half of the first century BC. Another more extensive ironworking area was located and excavated outside the fort to the north-east. Taken together the evidence from Bryn y Castell singles it out as one of the most important sites for the study of pre-Roman ironworking to be excavated in the Highland zone.



Figure 18.7 *The Brigg 'raft' during excavation (photograph: Sean McGrail).*

Another settlement site in the same area, Crawcwellt, Merioneth, which lies on the eastern flank of the Rhinog mountain, was also closely associated with iron production but is a little earlier, dating to

the third and second centuries BC. Several timber-built houses sheltered furnaces which were rebuilt on a number of occasions. Outside the settlement were three large slag heaps. It is estimated that during its lifetime the settlement could have produced a tonne of smithed blooms – equivalent to about one thousand currency bars (Crew 1998).

Another example comes from the open settlement at Brooklands, Weybridge, Surrey. Here two separate ironworking areas were identified, a western area where smelting was carried out and an eastern area dedicated to forging. In the smelting area the bases of seven bowl furnaces were found. The forging area was characterized by an absence of bowl furnaces, but quantities of slag of the type generally associated with the initial stages of forging were found. In spite of the comparatively large extent of the ironworking area Henry Cleere (in Hanworth and Tomlin 1977, 22) estimated that no more than 5–10 kg was produced at each smelt, the total output of the works during its lifetime being in the order of 200 kg, which would be more than adequate to meet the demands of a small community. Finally, at the early palisaded homestead of West Brandon, Co. Durham, two simple bowl furnaces were discovered, each about 30 cm in diameter and 20 cm deep (Figure 18.8). One of them was provided with a groove, in which the tuyère would have been placed, and contained the broken-up remains of a clay dome, showing that it had been at least partially enclosed.

The examples discussed so far reflect iron production at a ‘cottage-industry’ level probably by single families. It is likely that in certain favoured areas, where high-quality iron ore was to be had in quantity, larger-scale production developed. The Forest of Dean, Northamptonshire and the Weald are obvious possibilities but no very convincing evidence has yet been found. However, at Holme-on-Spalding Moor, E. Yorks., evidence for the extensive working of the local bog-iron has been identified extending along a former estuarine creek system and tidal inlet (Halkon 1997b) for a distance of some 15 km. Dating evidence suggests a beginning in the Middle Iron Age and a continuation through to the Roman period. Analysis of the slag inclusions in bars from three hoards of currency bars, found at Beckford, Danebury and Gretton, showed that it was possible to distinguish three different sources but the task of tracking down the actual location of the ore would be very much more difficult (Hedges and Salter 1979).

While comparatively few furnaces have been found (Gibson-Hill 1980; Tylecote 1986, 138–9), other evidence of iron-smelting – such as slag, cinder or iron ore – is more commonly found and leaves little doubt that iron extraction and forging was a widespread home craft

and not solely a skill in the hands of specialists. The processes involved in extraction were simple enough: the crushed ore, mixed with charcoal, would have been placed in a bowl furnace which may then have been partially covered with clay. Gradually, with the aid of bellows, the temperature would have been raised to above 800°C, at which point the reduction of the oxide would have taken place, the metal itself remaining as a spongy mass while the molten slag drained to the bottom of the furnace. On cooling, the reduced iron bloom would have been removed and continually heated and beaten until the remaining slag was forced out. The bloom was then ready for forging either into ingots for exchange or directly into implements or weapons. There seems to have been no deliberate attempt to strengthen the iron by the addition of carbon or phosphorus, but where stronger phosphorus-containing or carburised iron was produced by the normal extraction process, it may well have been selected for manufacture into weapons or tools requiring strong cutting edges (Ehrenreich 1985). Few blacksmith's tools have been identified but the Bulbury 'hoard' contains a heavy sledge hammer (Figure 18.9, no. 1), and a pair of tongs dating to the first century BC has been discovered at Garton Slack (Figure 18.5, no. 4).

The extraction processes were sufficiently simple for the production of iron to have been carried out on a part-time home basis, and over a large part of the country it would have been possible for many communities to extract enough ore for themselves from nearby deposits. Moreover, iron was not consumed in large quantities, since broken implements could be reforged into replacements with little difficulty. Thus a complex system of trade and specialization would not have been necessary except in those areas far away from ore deposits. Nevertheless, by the second and first centuries BC ingots of iron appear, and frequently turn up in hoards. There are three types of ingot: rhomboidal ingots of Continental type, of which only two have been found in Britain, on Portland Bill, Dorset; currency bars, widespread in the south of the country (Figures 18.10 and 18.11); and hooked billets – squat blocks of iron suitable for manufacturing heavier objects (Crew 1994). Currency bars can be divided into four broad types. Sword-shaped bars, with a short pinched-up hilt and a flat blade usually between 78 and 90 cm long, are found in an area stretching from Hampshire and Dorset in the south along the Jurassic Way to the Humber. Spit-shaped bars, usually much narrower than the sword-shaped versions and with a shorter pinched end, are concentrated in the Cotswolds and Somerset, with an outlier in Anglesey. The third variety, plough-shaped bars, are usually 4–6 cm wide and about 1 cm thick, roughly pointed at one end and with short raised wings or flanges at the blunt end. Distributionally they cluster

in the Thames valley, spreading into Kent and the Midlands. The last type are bay-leaf-shaped, with a long semi-circular sectioned hilt: only a few are known, principally from the Cambridgeshire region. Within these four broad types of bar ingot eighteen sub-types have been defined (Crew 1994).

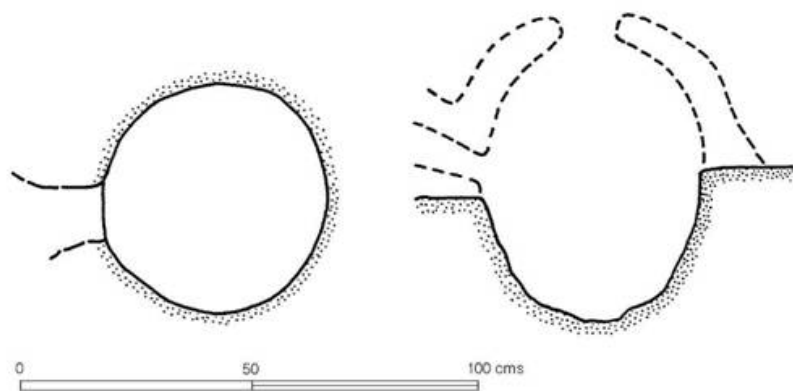


Figure 18.8 *Iron-smelting furnace at West Brandon, Co. Durham (source: Jobey 1962a).*

Much has been written on the subject of currency bars (Allen 1968b; Hingley 1991; Crew and Salter 1993; Crew 1994) and it is now widely agreed that the bars were ingots produced for trade and exchange, the different shapes reflecting different production centres. It is quite possible that the distinctive shapes were deliberately maintained so that the source, and therefore the quality, could be readily identified. The quality of the iron was further displayed by the way in which the bars were worked. Those, like the billets, that were drawn to a narrow point which was then bent over, or the sword types with their ends beaten to create a hollow tube, readily proclaimed the high quality of the malleable metal, while others with tips bent back and welded to the main shaft again demonstrated the metal's particular quality. Such qualities would have been sought by those acquiring currency bars and other ingots through the systems of exchange.

Experimental work has shown that to produce a kilogram of fully smithed bar iron, from bog iron ore, requires about 100 kg of charcoal and takes about twenty-five person-days of work (Crew 1991). A kilogram of bar iron would be equivalent to two or three currency bars.

The very existence of the bars, and the fact that each hoard was probably produced from a single source (at least in the cases of

Beckford, Danebury and Gretton), is sufficient to show that iron extraction had become a specialist skill in south-east Britain by the second century BC. It is tempting to suggest that this may reflect a move away from small-scale local production to more centralized production, at least in the south-east, as the Iron Age progressed. Such a change would have required the development of more organized redistribution mechanisms. In this context it is interesting to note the concentration of currency bar hoards in hillforts and the evidence from Danebury that bars were being cut up there for manufacture into tools and weapons. The appearance of the bars, implying specialist production, may have taken with it the development of specialist smiths working from selected locations. Eventually there may be enough analytical data to test this hypothesis. In any event the production of prestige goods like swords and daggers would certainly have been the prerogative of highly skilled craftsmen, perhaps organized in distinct schools (pp. 513–31).

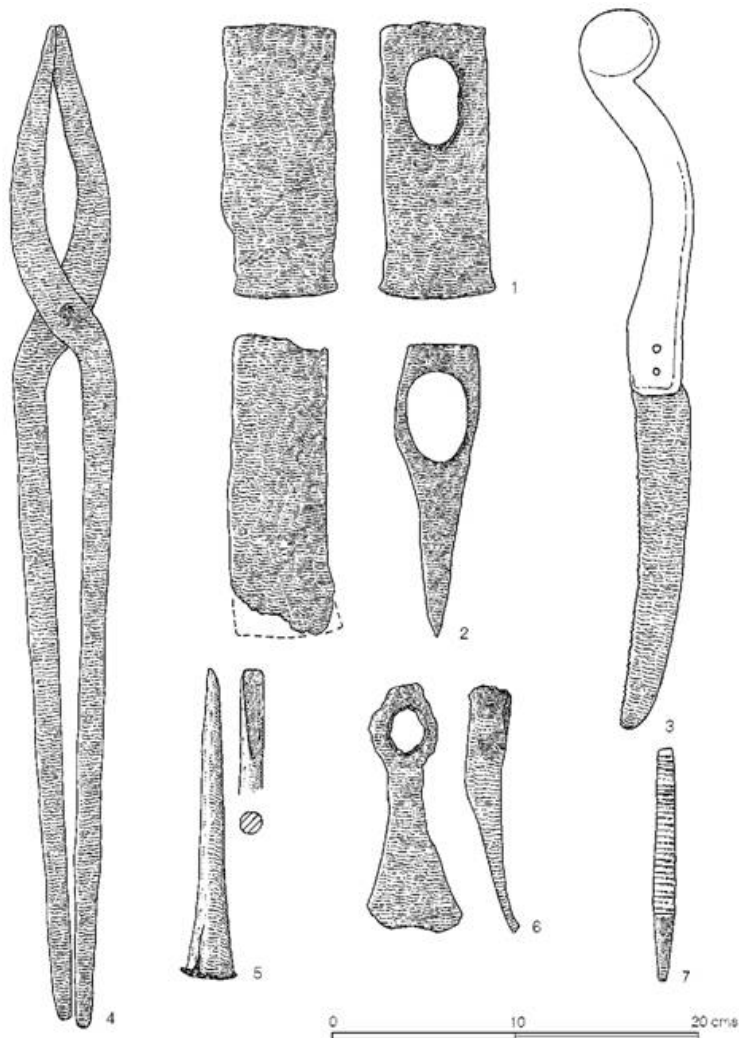


Figure 18.9 Iron tools: 1 hammer from Bulbury, Dorset; 2 axe-hammer from Bulbury, Dorset; 3 saw from Glastonbury, Somerset; 4 tongs from Garton Slack, Yorks.; 5 gouge from Danebury, Hants; 6 adze from Danebury, Hants; 7 file from Danebury, Hants (sources: Bulbury, Cunliffe 1972b; Glastonbury, Bulleid and Gray 1917; Danebury, Cunliffe 1984a; Garton Slack, Brewster 1976).

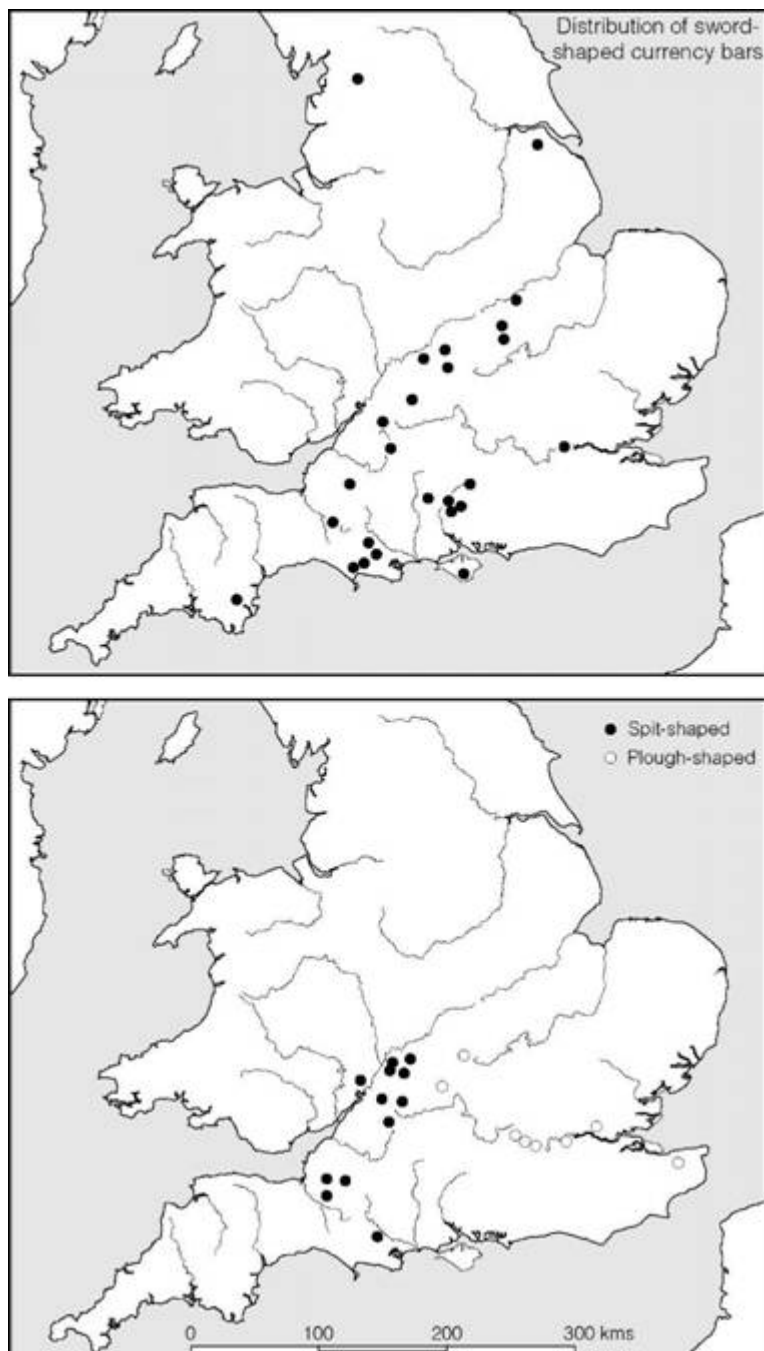


Figure 18.10 *Distribution of iron currency bars (source: Hingley 1990).*

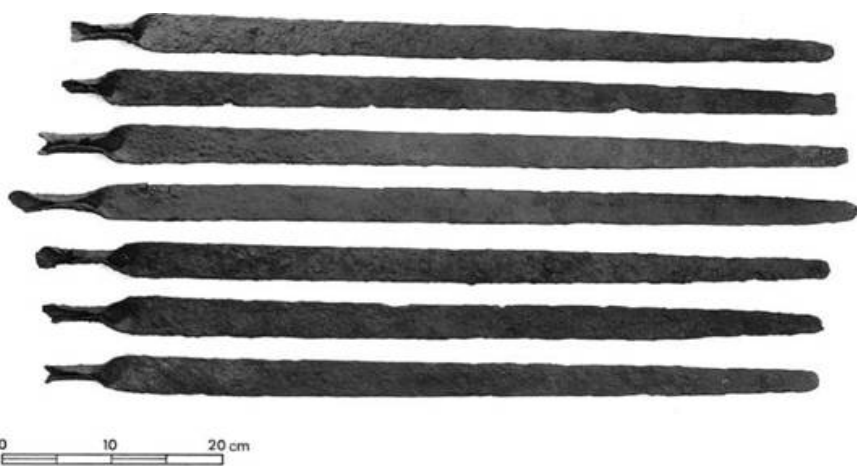


Figure 18.11 *Part of a hoard of iron sword-shaped currency bars from Danebury, Hants (photograph: David Leigh. Danebury Trust).*

Non-ferrous metallurgy: copper, tin, lead, silver and gold

Itinerant trading was a well-established pattern in the preceding Late Bronze Age for the production and distribution of bronze tools and weapons. No doubt these long-established traditions were maintained until as late as the fifth century, by which time iron was beginning to replace bronze as the common everyday metal. Bronze, however, continued to be used for the manufacture of vessels and for trinkets such as brooches, rings, bracelets, harness-trappings and other decorative fittings, but on a much more limited scale than before. No longer do we find founders' hoards scattered over the country, but instead small-scale production, probably in the hands of specialists resident in the larger centres.

It is only with the development of the urban and semi-urban centres like Hengistbury Head, Dorset, and Camulodunum, Essex, that large-scale metallurgical activities can be recognized. Archaeological evidence for bronzeworking in the Early and Middle Iron Age is not common, but crucibles and other waste are recorded from various sites (Figure 18.12) including Danebury, Hants, in both the Early and Middle Iron Age, and Glastonbury and Meare in Somerset, probably within the first century BC, and bronzeworkers' areas have been defined at South Cadbury, Somerset, Stanwick, Yorks. (Spratling 1981), Beckford, Heref. and Worcs. (Hurst and Wills 1987), and elsewhere.

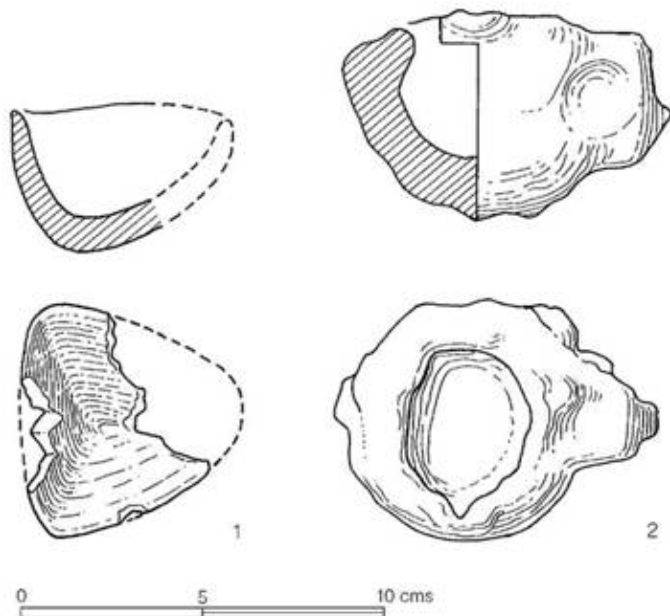


Figure 18.12 *Bronze-working crucibles: 1 Breedon-on-the-Hill, Leics.; 2 Danebury, Hants (sources: Breedon-on-the-Hill, Kenyon 1950; Danebury, author).*

Two sites are particularly informative, Weelsby, S. Humbs., and Gussage All Saints, Dorset. The settlement site of Weelsby, near Grimsby, has produced one of the most extensive deposits of bronzecasting debris known from the British Isles. The site was enclosed by a ditch and appears to have been a normal settlement. From the distribution of debris within it was possible to show that the preliminary stages of production took place in the eastern part of the enclosure while the casting of a range of objects was focused in the west. The debris included lost-wax moulds, crucibles, furnace debris, tuyère fragments, an ingot mould and various metalworking tools, as well as bronze wire and droplets of metal. It is evident from the moulds that the workshop manufactured horse-harness and chariot-fittings including terret-rings, linchpin terminals, horn-caps, three-link bits and strap-unions. More than 3,000 fragments of mould were recovered, about a quarter of them for making terret-rings which would have been attached to yokes to guide the reins (Foster 1995). So prolific was the debris that we must suppose that a large number of sets of horse gear were manufactured – far more than would have been needed by the local community.

A closely comparable array of material was recovered from the excavation of the settlement site of Gussage All Saints, Dorset. Here in

a pit of the late second or early first century extensive remains of a bronze foundry were recovered, including slag, crucibles, tuyères, a small copper ingot, bone modelling tools for wax proformas, and 8,000 fragments of clay investment moulds (Spratling 1979; Foster 1980). The moulds are of particular importance, for since they had been part of the lost-wax method of casting, each mould could have been used only once, thus allowing the total number of objects manufactured to be calculated. The range of products was restricted to horse gear and included three-link bridle-bits, terret-rings, linchpin terminals and strap-unions of figure-of-eight type. In all, it is thought that about fifty sets of fittings had been manufactured.

The discoveries are important not only for the technical information they give about bronze casting, but for the questions they raise about the position of the craftsman in society. While it is possible that he (or they) was a resident member of the local community, it would seem equally likely that skilled metalworkers of this kind may have been itinerant. Another possibility is that such men served under particular leaders but were seconded to the establishments of clients as a form of patronage. The various possible options are difficult to distinguish by archaeological means. However, a consideration of the distribution of products that may be assigned to the Gussage 'school' suggests a surprisingly wide distribution, covering much of south-eastern Britain with a particular concentration within the hillfort of Bury Hill, Hants (Cunliffe 1995). If, indeed, all these items are the product of a single craftsman or group of craftsmen it might suggest that they were working from more than one site in Wessex and were providing the fittings which adorned chariots and their accompanying teams of horses. It may have been that these vehicles with their trained horses were distributed widely throughout the south-east as gifts among élites. Such a scenario would suggest that the craftsmen were working for a patron or patrons who were the ones responsible for the distribution. The Gussage/Bury Hill 'school' and the Weelsby 'school' were probably only two among many, to judge from the variety of horse gear in circulation.

The products of individual craftsmen can occasionally be traced, distributed over a restricted territory. In Wessex, for example, there appears to have been a workshop producing a distinctive local version of the La Tène I fibula, with incised lines and impressed dots on the bow (Figure 18.13). More than twenty have been found, all within a 50 km radius of Salisbury in Wiltshire (Figure 18.14) (Hull and Hawkes 1987, 98–101). Although the actual production centre of the type is unknown, it is tempting to think in terms of a single bronze-worker based somewhere in the area supplying local needs in the fourth or third century. Small-scale manufacturing of this kind is

likely to have been the normal pattern for much of the country wherever communities were sufficiently large to have supported a non-food-producing specialist.

Our understanding of the bronzeworking in the Iron Age is being improved dramatically by metal analyses which are now becoming available (Northover 1988; Dungworth 1996). Dungworth has shown that the tin/copper alloy used in the Iron Age differed from that of the preceding Late Bronze Age. It was found throughout Britain, there being no significant geographical differences, an observation which might suggest that extensive exchange networks were in operation. Towards the end of the Iron Age some zinc was being introduced into the alloy, possibly as the result of the resmelting of imported Roman brass. Northover, studying different types of metalwork, has suggested that special alloys were being used for prestige sheet bronzework and that production may have been centred on the hillforts, contrasting with the manufacture of cast horse gear, the evidence for which tends to concentrate on homestead sites. If trends such as this are substantiated and amplified by further work, major advances in our understanding of the place of craft production in Iron Age social systems may be possible.

Until the fifth century or a little later, bronze scrap hoards were common in most parts of the country, particularly the south-east, but thereafter they ceased to be deposited. The extraction of copper would however have been maintained in Cornwall and Devon, north Wales and the Welsh borderland, Scotland and Ireland, and tin continued to be extracted from the Cornish deposits – in both cases by traditional techniques now more than 1,000 years old. Details of the extraction sites and processes are at present unknown, but ingots of the refined metals must have been widely traded, particularly to the populous south-east.

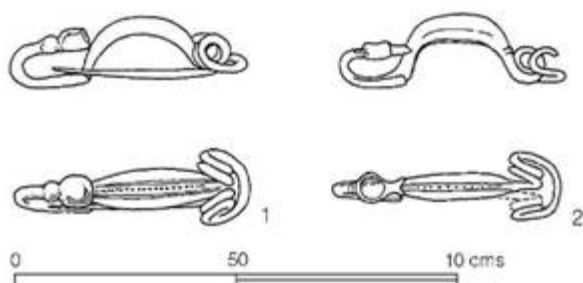


Figure 18.13 Wessex La Tène fibulae: 1 Blandford, Dorset; 2 Avebury, Wilts. (source: R.A. Smith 1925).

Little is yet known of the organization of bronze extraction in the Iron Age but excavation at the hillfort of Llwyn Bryn-Dinas, Clwyd, in the Upper Avon valley, offers some interesting insights. Here a limited trial excavation sampled a workshop in which copper and iron were being worked in the third century BC. The interest of the site lies in the fact that the actual location of the hillfort is rich in malachite ore. Other ore sources in the immediate region occur 22 km to the west, close to the hillfort of Graig Rhiwarth, and 10 km to the south near the Breiddin hillfort. Besides the workshop at Llanymynech evidence of copper working has been identified at six other sites within a 15 km radius (Mussen *et al.* 1992, figure 4). Clearly copper was being extracted from local ores and worked at all the sites within easy reach. This would suggest that copper extraction may have been one of the normal activities practised alongside the farming regime, allowing the community to produce a surplus of metal for exchange.

Tin is rather more restricted in its distribution, the only workable sources being found in Cornwall and around Dartmoor in Devon. From here the tin for the whole of Britain was produced. Tin was also exported to the Continent. The elder Pliny (*Nat. Hist.* IV, 16, 104) tells us that the fourth-century historian Timaeus reported that 'the island of Mictus, where tin is to be got, is six days' sailing from Britain further inwards'. Similarly, Diodorus Siculus, referring to the voyaging of the explorer Pytheas in the late fourth century states:

In Britain the inhabitants of the promontory called Belerion are particularly friendly to strangers and have become civilized through contacts with merchants from foreign parts... They prepare the tin, working the ground in which it is produced very carefully... they beat the metal into masses shaped like an ox hide and carry it to a certain island lying off Britain called Ictis.

(V, 22)

Although there is still some doubt as to the exact identification of Ictis (above p. 472) (Cunliffe 1983; Hawkes 1984), it is clear that there was a well-developed tin trade between Cornwall and the civilized world – tin was being produced for the export market as well as home consumption. To what extent copper continued to be exported in the first millennium cannot yet be ascertained.

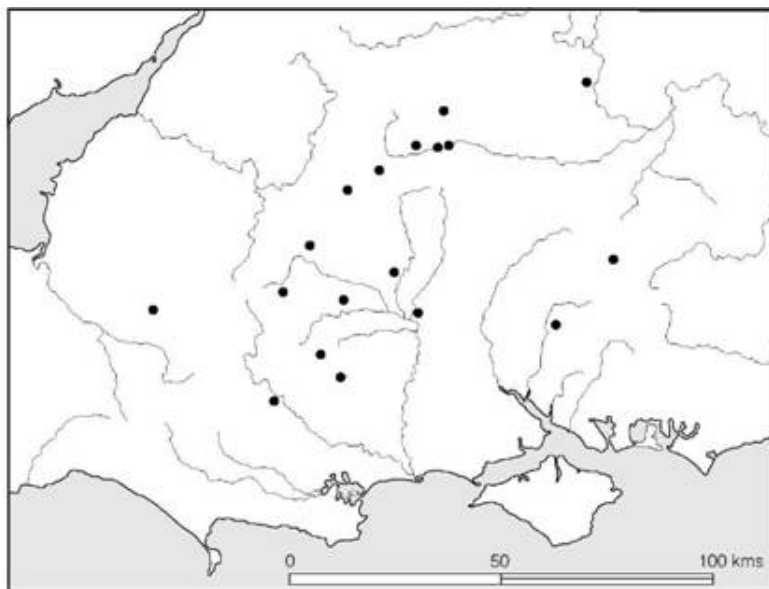


Figure 18.14 *Distribution of Wessex fibulae (source: M.J. Fowler 1954 with additions).*

Lead was not of great significance in the pre-Roman period. Admittedly, in the Late Bronze Age it was added to the bronze used for implements distributed in the south-east, and lead objects are found sporadically on occupation sites of the Iron Age, but it was never extensively used. Only in the first-century BC contexts at Glastonbury are any number of lead objects found, and here the metal was usually restricted to double perforated net-sinkers and spindle whorls. Lead is unlikely to have been extracted for its own properties, but as an additive to bronze to improve its casting properties it would have been of some value. Later, when silver was being extracted from argentiferous galena by the process of cupellation, lead would have been a by-product which could have been put to use locally. The finds from Glastonbury imply the working, albeit limited, of the Mendip lead deposits for which there is some archaeological evidence (Todd 2003), but of the exploitation of ore deposits elsewhere – in Shropshire, Flintshire, Derbyshire and Yorkshire – little is known before the Roman period.

Silver was extracted in limited quantities, but intensive production did not develop until the first century BC, when the demand for coinage increased in the south-east and the metal was also used alloyed with gold to make torcs. Gold too is rare before the first century. Objects of Irish gold made in the Late Bronze Age tradition were still finding their way into Britain in the seventh and sixth

centuries, but it was the social and economic development of the first century BC that encouraged more widespread exploitation. Derek Allen (1975) has estimated that during the thirty-year reign of Cunobelin more than 1 million gold coins were issued requiring over 5,000 kg of gold.

Glass

Comparatively few glass objects have been found in Britain (Guido 1978), but many of them have been subjected to a systematic analysis (Henderson 1981, 1985, 1987a and b, 1992; Henderson and Warren 1981). As a result it is now becoming clear that the production of beads and bracelets was a complex matter. Manufacture seems to have been restricted to very few sites. At Hengistbury Head, Dorset, raw glass, in the form of blocks of purple and yellow glass, was being imported, presumably from Gaul or the Mediterranean, and although direct evidence of manufacture was not found, the number of fragments of finished beads and bracelets recovered from the site strongly suggests that Hengistbury was a production centre converting imported raw materials into finished items (Henderson 1987a). Another glassworks has been located at Meare, Somerset, where the unusually large number of glass items from the old excavations has hinted at local production for some time. The discovery of a partially finished bead now provides direct evidence that this was the case (Henderson 1981, 1992). The rarity of glass beads and bracelets in Britain and the very slight evidence of production so far discovered is an indication of the prestige in which glass was probably held and the high status of glass-workers.

Pottery production

In south-east Britain the production of pottery was on a considerable scale. As the discussion in [chapters 5, 8 and 9](#) will have shown, well-defined regional styles can be recognized from an early date – a fact which might be thought to imply some degree of commercial production, at least of the finer wares.

Types like the scratched cordoned bowls of Wessex, made in very fine black ware with an evenly applied haematite-coated surface, fired red and scratched after firing in simple geometric patterns, are so similar to each other and so restricted in their distribution that it is highly likely that they were manufactured in a single centre: petrological examination of the fabrics suggests that the production may have concentrated on the brickearth deposits close to Salisbury. Later, in the Middle Iron Age, much the same region used a saucepan

pot assemblage decorated in a distinctive manner and made from a fabric incorporating the mineral glauconite found in the Jurassic and cretaceous clays to the west of Salisbury. The combination of specially chosen clay and the restricted decorative repertoire in both of these examples suggests specialist production ([Figure 18.15](#)). The same may be said with less certainty of much of the early fine ware in the south, but until a detailed programme of petrological examination has been undertaken on this early material, it would be unwise to speculate further.

The pottery of two other regions – the stamped and linear tooled ware of the Welsh borderland and Gloucestershire, and the highly decorated ‘Glastonbury’ ware of the south-west – has been examined in detail with these problems in mind (Peacock 1968, 1969, 1979; Morris 1981). Both groups date largely to the fourth to first centuries BC but manufacture probably began in the preceding century. On the basis of the filling material added to the clay, the linear tooled and stamped ware of the west can be divided into four groups (Peacock 1968): group A contains igneous and metamorphic rock derived from the Malvern Hills; group B1 is gritted with a Palaeozoic limestone, and group B2 with a Mesozoic limestone, probably from the Jurassic outcrop; and group C contains a crushed sandstone from the Llandovery beds west of the Malverns. The types belonging to all four groups, while generally similar, can be shown to have distinctive features, and some degree of differential distribution can be observed. The implication, however, seems to be that, within one culturally related area, specialist potters were at work in at least four centres supplying the ceramic needs of the communities living within a broad territory 80–130 km from the production centres.

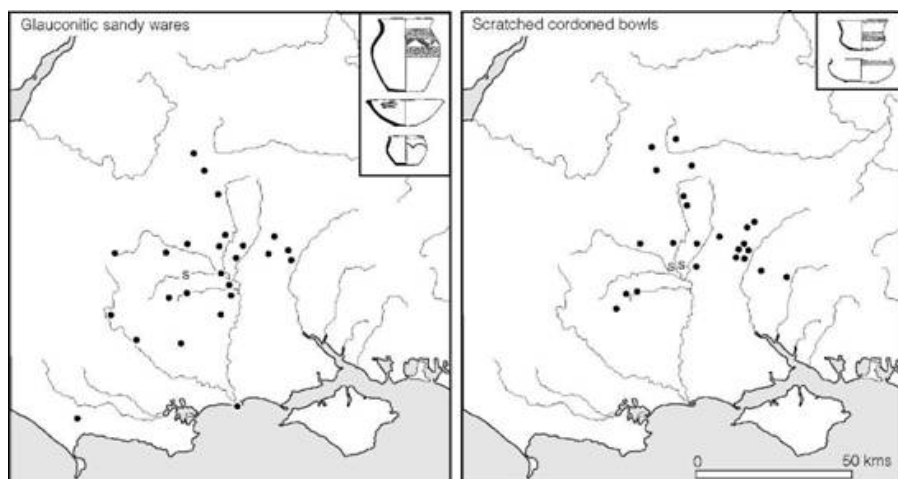


Figure 18.15 Specialist pottery production in Wessex. *S* indicates source

of the clay used (source: Cunliffe 2000).

If, however, the distribution of these decorated wares is compared with that of a simple coarse ware made from clay gritted with diorite from the Clee Hills an interesting contrast is apparent, with the coarse ware covering a much smaller territory, no more than 40 km from the source (Figure 18.16). The contrast is between the local distribution of a low quality product and the regional distribution of one of high quality acceptable in exchanges over a much larger area (Morris 1981).

Much the same pattern has emerged from a petrological study of the South-Western Decorated Wares (Figure 18.17). Six different groups have been recognized, each with distinctive typological characteristics and a restricted distribution pattern. Only in the case of group 1, which contains gabbro inclusions and must therefore have been made in Cornwall, is there any evidence of widespread trade, some of the vessels of this category reaching Devon, Somerset, Hampshire, Sussex, Kent, Essex and Northamptonshire.

If this kind of analysis is extended, the stylistic considerations which serve to distinguish the regional groups of the saucepan pot continuum may prove to result from the work of separate manufacturing centres in much the same way.

It is, then, becoming increasingly clear that the manufacture of fine pottery had become a specialist craft in many regions by the beginning of the first century BC and the probability remains that specialization in some regions dates back to the fifth century or even earlier. Nothing is yet known of the production centres themselves, but it is unlikely that elaborate kilns existed, since simple bonfire firings would have been quite sufficient to produce the wares: little archaeological evidence of manufacture can therefore be expected to survive. Some degree of commercial production does not, of course, exclude home production, and indeed it is probable that a reasonably high percentage of the local coarse wares were home-made in the earlier periods, but by the second and first centuries even the plainer and simpler vessels take on a mass-produced appearance, suggesting that commercial enterprise was now dominant. In the first century BC and early first century AD a major industry had grown up along the south side of Poole Harbour producing pottery that was widely distributed throughout Wessex (Hearne and Smith 1992; Brown 1997). Later, in the Roman period, this was to become one of the major pottery-producing regions in Britain.

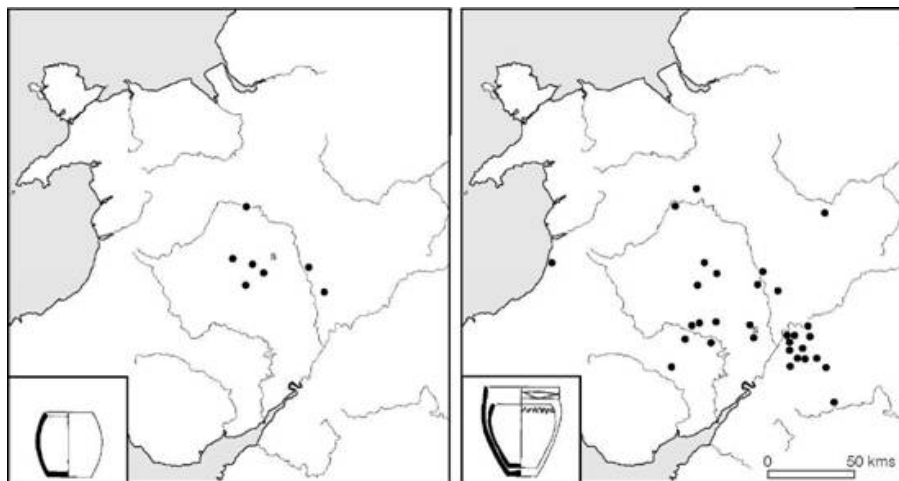


Figure 18.16 Specialist pottery production in the Welsh borderland. *S* indicates source of clay used (source: Morris 1981).

Shale, jet and lignite

Certain areas of the country developed specializations because of their mineral wealth. In Cornwall some communities were geared to the extraction of tin at an early date, and later the Wealden population specialized in iron production. In other areas stone was exploited for the manufacture of trinkets such as rings and bracelets. The best-known centre of this kind is the Isle of Purbeck in Dorset, where the black or dark brown oily shale, known as Kimmeridge shale, was quarried from the cliffs and taken to neighbouring occupation sites for manufacture into armlets. Judging by the number of sites producing evidence of shale-working in the vicinity, the industry was well established and must have had a sizeable output. Excavations at Eldon's Seat (Encombe), Dorset, have allowed the various stages in the manufacturing process to be worked out (Figure 18.18). First, it seems that large slabs of shale were brought to the site, possibly threaded on poles for ease of carrying. Then, with the aid of simply-struck knives of flint, flat discs, some 13 cm across, were carved out. The next stage involved either boring a central hole or cutting out a core, thus creating a ring which could gradually be whittled down and finally ground to form finished bracelets, armlets, anklets or, occasionally, pendants.

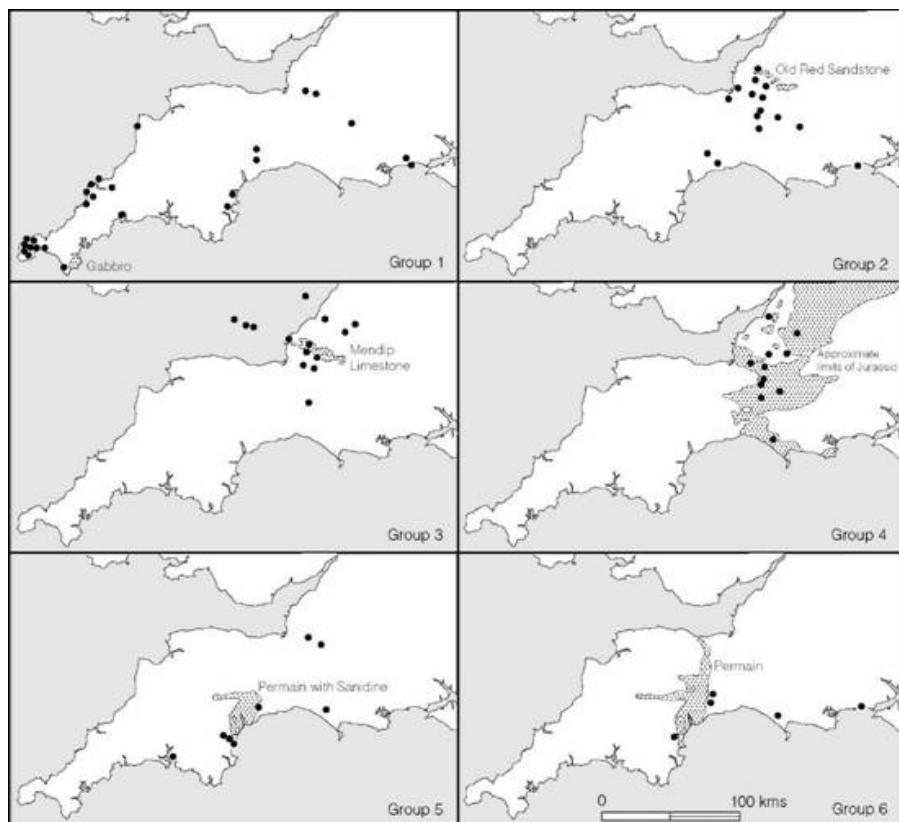


Figure 18.17 *Specialist pottery production in the south-west (source: Peacock 1969).*

The Kimmeridge shale industry flourished throughout the Iron Age and Roman period, but from the sixth to the second century, techniques of manufacture changed little. It was only after the introduction of lathe-turning in the first century that the nature of production began to take on a more commercial aspect and the range of products was increased to include quite large vessels. The distribution of Kimmeridge shale artefacts spread over much of central southern Britain but does not seem to have been particularly extensive outside an 80 km radius of Purbeck. The exact nature of the processes of exchange and distribution are unclear. The intense activity recognized at the production sites on Purbeck leaves little doubt that finished objects were being manufactured, but the occurrence of rough-out armlets at various sites, including Hengistbury, Glastonbury, Danebury, etc., means that trade in raw materials, or at least unfinished products, also formed part of the system.



Figure 18.18 *Kimmeridge shale-working debris from Eldon's Seat, Encombe, Dorset (photograph: George Keene).*

In the Late Iron Age Kimmeridge shale was used to make a variety of elegant lathe-turned vessels which are found in Aylesford–Swarling contexts in the east of Britain (Figure 18.19). Although some doubt has been expressed about the Dorset origin of this shale (Kennett 1977) palynological analysis of a vessel from Harpenden has supported a Dorset provenance (Denford and Riding 1991).

In northern Britain the place of shale was taken by jet, a black shiny rock found in the Upper Lias exposed on the Yorkshire coast between Ravenscar and Port Mulgrave. The crude jet seems to have been taken to occupation sites and worked, in much the same way as shale, into bracelets, finger-rings and pendants, a number of which were found at Staple Howe in sixth-century contexts. The discovery of jet or lignite bracelets at the Heathery Burn Cave in County Durham implies that production was underway as early as the seventh century. Jet trinkets are also found in later contexts, among the Arras culture burials of eastern Yorkshire, and it is well known that production continued into the Roman period. Jet was also popular in Scotland as far north as the Orkneys. It is, however, possible that more than one source of material was exploited and that the more northerly finds were derived

from deposits in Scotland. Until a programme of chemical analysis is undertaken, the problem will remain unresolved.

Quernstones

Quernstones, used for grinding corn to make flour, were essential for the well-being of every family. The procurement of a steady supply of quernstones was therefore a necessity. In the Early Iron Age saddle querns, worked by moving an upper stone backwards and forwards across a hollowed lower stone, were the type normally used but during the Middle Iron Age rotary querns became widespread throughout the country.

Petrological studies have shown that selected quarries were preferred presumably because of their accessibility and the quality of the stone they produced. One quarry, identified at Lodsworth near Midhurst, Sussex, produced querns of fine Upper Greensand which were widely distributed in Wessex (Peacock 1987). Another on the coast near Folkestone, Kent, worked the Hythe Beds of the Lower Greensand (Keller 1989). Querns from this source have been found throughout the south-east, reaching as far north as Hunsbury, Northants. In contrast, in Yorkshire the study of 120 or so beehive querns has shown that the five different rock types used were all comparatively local to the distribution (Hayes, Hemingway and Spratt 1980) and the same localized pattern has been noted in the Tees valley (Gwilt and Heslop 1995). Clearly different patterns of production and distribution were to be found in different parts of the country.

A study of the 124 querns recovered from Hunsbury provides a vivid idea of quern procurement in the Iron Age (Ingle 1994). Ten different stone sources have been identified, showing that querns were being imported from as far afield as the Bristol region, the Pennines, Lodsworth, Folkestone and the Lincolnshire Wolds.

The control of good stone supplies and the manufacture and distribution of finished querns, often over considerable distances, would have required complex systems of control embedded within the social system.

Salt

One of the more important of the consumer products of Iron Age Britain was salt, the principal sources of which were seawater and the brine springs of the west Midlands. Salt would have been required not only as an essential part of the diet but also as a preservative for meat stored during the winter.

Evidence for salt extraction is now well known around much of the south-east coast of Britain, particularly the low-lying areas of Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Essex, Hampshire and Dorset (Nenquin 1961; Riehm 1961; Farrar 1963, 1975; Baker 1975; Bradley 1975; Kirkham 1975; May 1976b, 143–55; De Brisay 1978; Sealey 1995), and as a result of the abundant but somewhat fragmentary evidence now available, the main stages in the extraction processes are reasonably clear, though not everywhere represented (Figures 18.20 and 18.21).

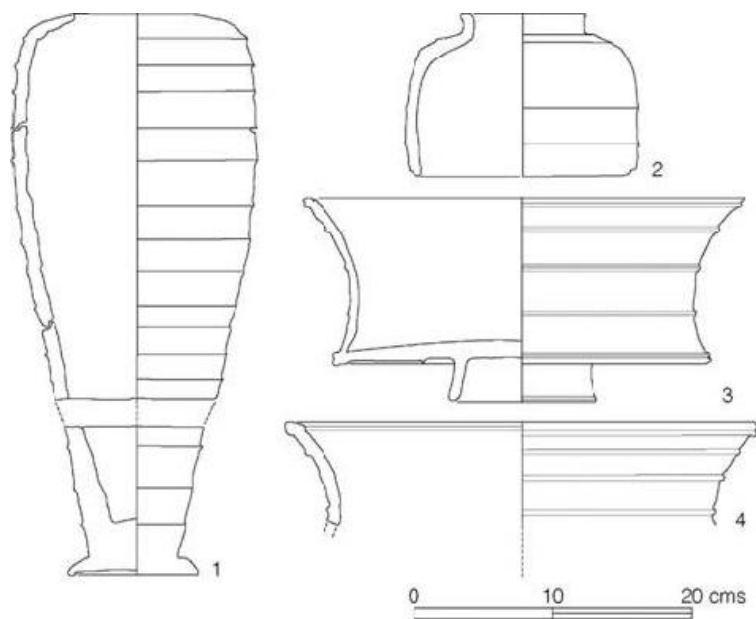


Figure 18.19 Vessels of Kimmeridge shale: 1 and 2 Harpenden, Herts. (source: author); 3 Barnwell, Cambs. (source: Kennet 1997); 4 Lexden, Essex (source: Birchall 1965).

Seawater was first encouraged to flow into large evaporation pans, probably at the beginning of the summer, and allowed to stand to evaporate, suitably covered from the rain, until autumn. The crust of crude salt and the underlying salt-impregnated clay were then broken up and roasted in an open fire to facilitate the next stage, which involved dissolving the salt from the resulting granular mass using a strong brine solution and then decanting off the salt-rich liquor which was evaporated in large boiling pans, supported on clay bars. More often, however, the damp crystalline salt seems to have been scooped out and packed into porous clay moulds, which were probably warmed to 60–70°C to complete the drying operation. At Halle in Germany, where a number of complete moulds have been found, it is evident that standard sizes were aimed at so that the resultant salt-

cakes would have been of equal value. It follows that the simplest way to market the salt would have been in the moulds. Insufficient data are available from the British sites to show whether or not the same standardization applied here, but in all probability it did.

The division between the initial extraction of the salt and its packaging and drying is emphasized by two sites in the Isle of Purbeck, Dorset – Hobarrow Bay and Kimmeridge (Calkin 1949, 56–7; Farrar 1975) – both of which occur on the tops of cliffs overlooking shelving beaches. Since it would have been impracticable to carry seawater to them for evaporation, it is more reasonable to suppose that pans and evaporation tanks lay on the beach, the damp salt being carted to the cliff-top site for drying and packing in clay moulds ready for distribution. Hobarrow Bay produced a range of briquetage including parts of rectangular trays and cylindrical tray supports associated with masses of burnt shale, while at Kimmeridge in a similar context hemispherical bowls were recovered together with cylindrical vessels cut in halves partially or totally before firing (Figure 18.21). The former belong to a well-known type of drying mould found on many of the salt-works but the half-cylinders are more puzzling. Some, which were completely cut through before firing, could conceivably have been bound together during the drying process, to be then sliced in two, together with their salt-cake, to produce two half-measures, while those cylinders which were only incompletely separated could easily have been cracked apart after the contents had dried. Admittedly, both explanations seem to be overcomplicated but it is difficult to suggest a simpler process. Whatever the final outcome of the problem, the fact remains that the cliff-top sites were concerned predominantly with drying the salt and not with its primary extraction, which must have been carried out on the beaches.

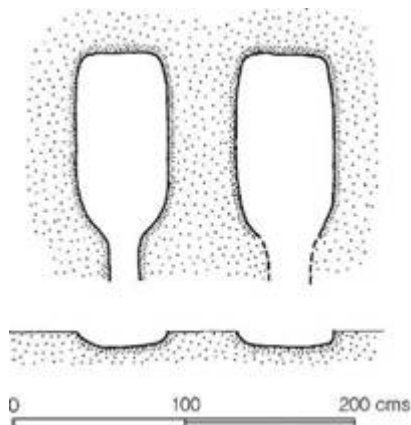


Figure 18.20 Salt-boiling hearths at Ingoldmells, Lincs. (source: Baker 1960).

Both Hobarrow Bay and Kimmeridge belong to the early part of the Iron Age, dating to as early as the fifth century. At Paulsgrove, in Portsmouth Harbour, Hants, a production centre of the fourth or third century has been found. Sites of the second to first centuries are more common, occurring at Wyke Regis (Dorset), Hayling Island and many locations around the fringes of Langstone and Chichester harbours. The Lincolnshire industry seems to have begun in the early part of the period – perhaps the third or second century to judge by the few sherds of associated pottery (Baker 1960, figures 1 and 2) – and to have continued into the Roman period (May 1976b, 143–55), while the even more extensive centres on the Essex coast span the first century BC to first century AD, possibly beginning earlier (Rodwell 1976, 298–301; Sealey 1995). A similar date range can be assigned to the group in Poole Harbour, Hants. The extent and duration of most of the production centres speak of an intensive industry becoming more important as time proceeded. While it is likely that in the earlier period salt extraction was practised on a part-time basis (Bradley 1975), in the later centuries it was probably carried out by specialists working full time and supplying the needs of a considerable inland market (Morris 1994, 384–6).

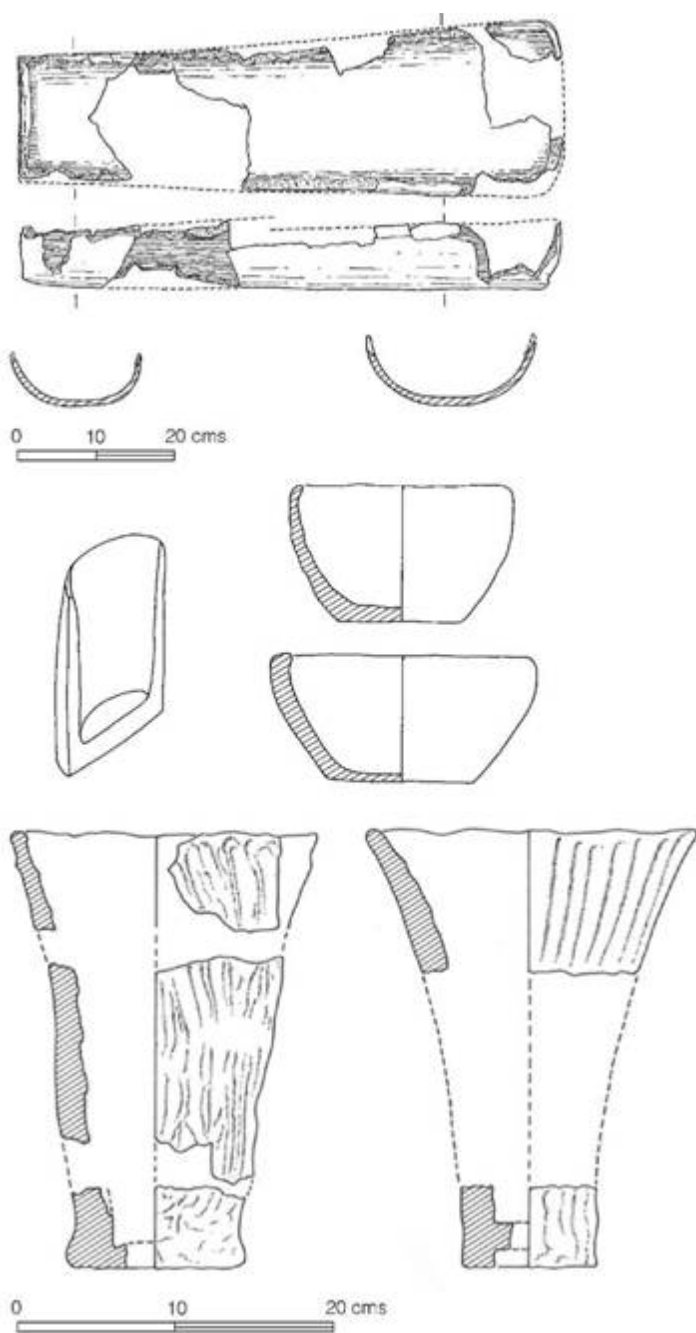


Figure 18.21 Salt containers: top, from Ingoldmells, Lincs. (source: May 1976b); middle, from the Isle of Purbeck (source: Calkin 1949); bottom, from Croft Ambrey and Sutton Walls, Heref. and Worcs. (source: Stanford 1974).

The salt springs of Droitwich, Worcs., and Nantwich, Cheshire, both producing high-quality salt, were extensively utilized in the Iron Age. At Droitwich large timber-lined tanks were found in which the brine was left to concentrate before being evaporated on nearby ovens (Woodiwiss 1992). The salt was packed in briquetage containers for drying and transport and, since the fabrics of these can be distinguished and related to source, it is possible to trace the distribution of the different production centres across the Midlands. An assessment of these data (Morris 1985) has thrown important new light on patterns of trade and exchange. The Droitwich spring was in use as early as the sixth to fifth centuries and its characteristic briquetage containers, though not common in this period, were found up to 60 km to the north and 48 km to the south of the source. From the fourth century onwards there is abundant evidence of production, but the distribution is concentrated to the south-west and south-east of the spring with very little reaching the north (Figure 18.22). The reason for this may well be that salt from the Nantwich area, identified by its own distinctive containers, was now being traded far more extensively and was beginning to 'capture' some of the market once supplied by the Droitwich spring. The social implications of these patterns are especially interesting. As Morris has shown (1981), the distribution of the fine Malvernian A pottery is closely similar to that of the Droitwich salt containers: together they define a socio-economic territory occupying the southern Marches. The appearance of 'northern' salt within this southern territory after the fifth century might suggest a degree of social reorientation which may reflect on changing concepts of ethnic identity or simply herald an intensification of production and exchange.

Specialist schools of metalworkers

The crafts and industries discussed so far were designed to serve the immediate needs of the community, providing clothing, tools, utensils, salt and a few trinkets such as brooches and bracelets made of metal and stone. Luxury products were scarce before the second century BC, perhaps implying that the development of a class society requiring expensive forms of display had not proceeded far. Without surplus wealth and the desire for display there could be little patronage, and without patronage schools of artist-craftsmen are unlikely to have flourished. That some specialists were at work, however, is evident. The production of cauldrons and buckets in the west, probably Ireland (Hawkes and Smith 1957; Gerloff 1987), in the late second and early first millennium is a reflection of the feasting aspects of a heroic society, while the elaborate harness-fittings and cart-trappings show

that some members of society were sufficiently wealthy to indulge in such luxuries, all of which were the products of craftsmen working in the old Bronze Age traditions.

The most impressive evidence of a continuous tradition of inventive craftsmanship is provided by the swords and daggers from the river Thames, so densely distributed that there can be little doubt of their local origin. Production began in the late second or early first millennium with the manufacture of local bronze types copied from Continental imports. Later in the eighth century the Hallstatt C Gündlingen sword developed in Continental Europe and was immediately taken up locally, leading to the production of a series of distinctively British types (Cowen 1967). In the sixth and fifth centuries new Continental trends, particularly the appearance of iron daggers of Hallstatt D1 date, were quickly absorbed and there arose a British dagger series which spanned the period until the end of the third century (Jope 1961b, 1983, 2000, 17–22). Thereafter swords, influenced by Continental La Tène I types, became common again.

Cheshire salt containers

Droitwich salt containers

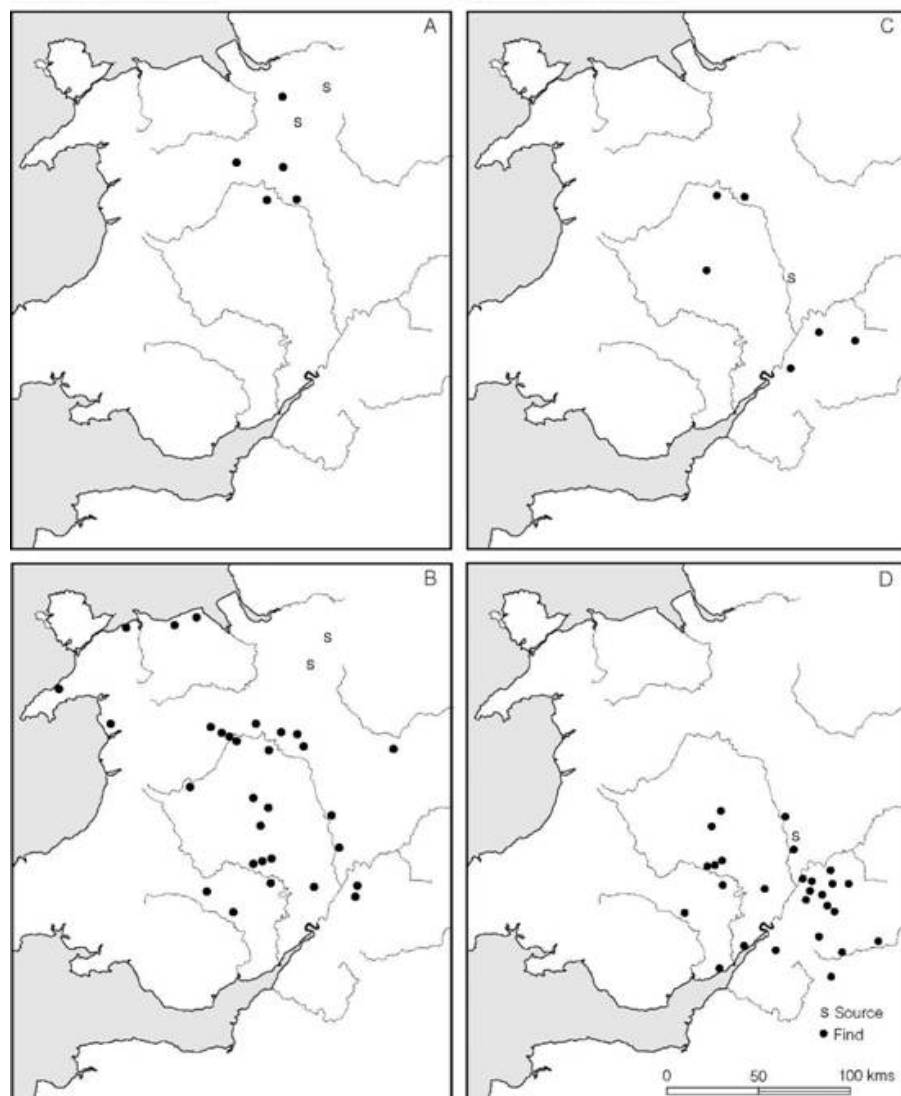


Figure 18.22 Salt containers in western Britain showing competing spheres of distribution: A and B sixth and fifth centuries; C and D fourth century and later (source: Morris 1985).

The evidence of the Thames daggers argues convincingly for a highly skilled workshop geared to the aristocratic market of the fifth and fourth centuries, turning out exquisitely made iron daggers in elaborate bronze sheaths. This British development runs parallel to Continental sword and dagger production which, from the fourth century, provided a medium for the practice of the decorative techniques belonging to the general repertoire of the La Tène artist. In

Britain no well-established schools are known to have existed at this time but a few of the dagger sheaths bear simple decoration. Those from the Thames at Windsor and at Wandsworth have openwork chapes while the entire scabbard from the Thames at Hammersmith is formed in an openwork technique (Figure 17.14). These pieces show a high degree of skill but are hardly comparable to the decorative art style appearing at this time on the European mainland.

Much has been written on the problem of British La Tène art and its relationship to Continental styles. De Navarro, basing his work on the scheme created by Paul Jacobstahl, divided the British finds into four styles which he numbered I–IV. This terminology has been revised by Stead (1985b), who has extended it by adding a Style V. Stead's scheme provides a simple classification which helps to place individual pieces in a broad chronological context.

Style I is characterized by motifs of recognizable Greek ancestry incorporating palmettes flanked by lotus flowers. Few objects decorated in this style are known in Britain. The scabbard from Minster Ditch, near Oxford, with its somewhat halting attempts at a flowing pattern (Figure 18.23), is close to the early Continental style though evidently of local manufacture, but by far the most impressive of the early British pieces is the scabbard of a dagger found in the Wisbech area, Cambs. (Figure 18.24). It is decorated in the rocked tracer technique with a palmette flanked by lotus petals or lyres (Jope 2000, 22). The same motifs, though in more elaborate combinations, decorate the flange of a bronze lid from a cist grave at Cerrig y Drudion, Clwyd (Stead 1982; Jope 2000, 23–5). This last item is particularly interesting in that it may be an import; such pieces would have inspired native craftsmen, like those who made the Minster Ditch and Wisbech scabbards, in their experiments which created the first insular La Tène art style in Britain.

Style II derives its inspiration from the Continental 'Waldalgesheim style' and is characterized by running scrolls of linked fleshy triangles in vogue on the Continent in the fourth and early third centuries BC. The most elegant example from Britain is a shield boss dredged from the river Trent near Ratcliffe-on-Soar (Figure 18.25). The central part of the boss is decorated with a brilliant free-flowing tendril design based on animal forms, very close in spirit to the Continental Waldalgesheim style of the late fourth century (Watkin *et al.* 1996). This piece, evidently a British product, must have been made by a craftsman thoroughly conversant with the art of the Continent. Another fine example is the assured and elegantly worked sword scabbard from Standlake, Oxon. (Figure 18.26) (Case 1949; Jope 2000, 26–8). Although of British manufacture, several structural details – such as the iron chape-binding – are comparable to

Continental examples of the middle La Tène period, suggesting a close relationship with European developments. The tip-plate too, worked in a pelta with end scrolls, dimly reflects the split palmette motif of mature Waldalgesheim work but is infinitely superior in quality to the first falterings of the Minster Ditch example. Other British examples include the heavy cast bronze bracelet from a burial at Newnham Croft, Cambs., and the bronze pommel fitting (or 'horn cap') from Brentford.

British Style III, which corresponds to Jacobstahl's 'plastic style' and 'sword style', is not well represented in Britain. Two brooches, from Danes Graves, Yorks., and Newnham Croft, both with high relief carving on their bows can, however, be regarded as a pale British reflection of this otherwise vigorous Continental tradition, while from the Thames at Hammersmith were recovered two swords, the sheaths of which were decorated with 'dragon pairs' (Stead 1984b) ([Figure 17.18](#)). This motif is found throughout Europe and may ultimately have developed in Hungary, influenced by patterns in vogue among the Thracian artists in what is now Bulgaria.



Figure 18.23 Bronze dagger sheath from Minster Ditch, Oxford (actual length of sheath: 350 mm) (photograph: Ashmolean Museum, Oxford).



Figure 18.24 Top of the bronze dagger sheath from Wisbech, Cambs. (actual length: 127 mm) (photograph: Wisbech Museum).

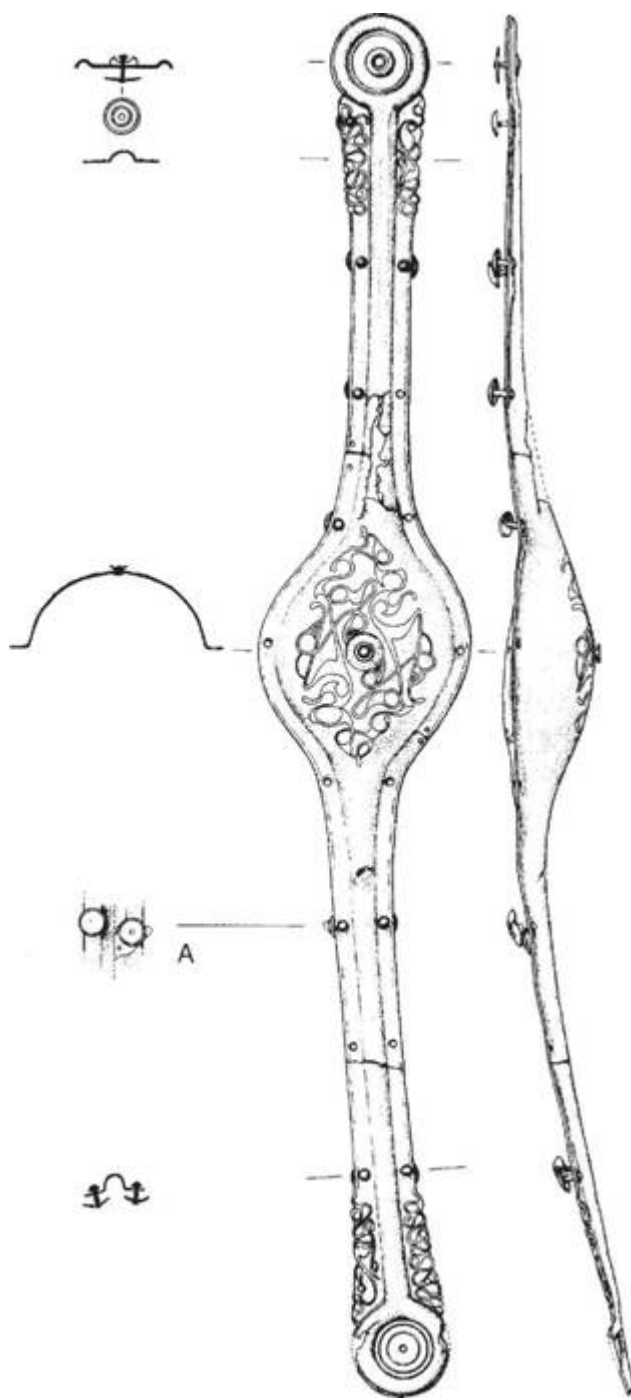


Figure 18.25 Shield boss from the River Trent, near Ratcliffe-on-Soar, Warks. (length: 892 mm) (drawing by Patricia Mallett. Reproduced by permission of Leamington Spa Art Gallery and Museum).



Figure 18.26 Top and bottom plates of bronze from a sword sheath from Standlake, Oxon. (actual width of top plate: 50 mm; actual length of bottom plate illustrated: 150 mm) (photograph: Ashmolean Museum).

By the second century BC schools of native craftsmen were producing highly accomplished works of art which can be classed as

Style IV. Of these the famous parade shield dredged up from the river Witham in Lincolnshire in about 1826 (Figure 18.27) is perhaps the most remarkable item for the bringing together in one harmonious work of a number of isolated themes, some of them archaic, which ultimately derive from southern Gaul and Italy (Jope 1971, 2000, 54–62). There can be little doubt of its local British production, for several peculiarities of the decoration can be found on earlier works in the area and continue to appear on later products.

The same river has yielded another superb example of decorative art of much the same period in the form of a bronze mounting from the mouth of a scabbard. Like the shield, the Witham scabbard involves the same combination of gentle three-dimensional moulding and delicate incised curvilinear designs carefully planned with a great love of the asymmetric. These themes recur on two shield bosses recovered from the Thames at Wandsworth (Figures 18.28 and 18.29) which, though of the same date range or a little later, are evidently the work of different craftsmen. Of the two mountings the circular boss (Figure 18.29) is the most dramatic, its surface decorated with a pair of great birds, wings outstretched and tail feathers trailing behind, each so arranged and selectively illustrated as to be a mirror image of the other. With its careful use of repoussé and incised ornament, this must be considered among the masterpieces of British Celtic art (Jope 2000, 68–9).

To this same tradition of second-century aristocratic art must be added the so-called Torrs chamfrein from Kirkcudbrightshire (Figure 18.30) which now, as the result of detailed study, can be seen to be a pony cap to which two horns have subsequently been attached (Atkinson and Piggott 1955). The cap itself is decorated in repoussé with bilaterally similar patterns based on the open-looped pelta motif, each ending in a superbly executed bird's head with evident similarities to the Wandsworth shield boss. The two bronze horns found with the pony cap probably served originally as terminals for drinking horns. Both end in recurved birds' heads moulded in relief, originally with inset eyes of glass or coral, not at all unlike the repoussé birds' heads depicted on the cap. The sides of the horns were decorated with finely incised symmetric curvilinear designs, many details of which – particularly the use of tightly coiled spirals to fill in the leaves – can be paralleled on the other objects decorated in the Witham–Wandsworth tradition.

The pieces belonging to the Witham–Wandsworth–Torrs group described here are the major items of an artistic tradition, centred in the east of England, which was providing articles of display for the aristocratic market in the second century BC. The fineness of the craftsmanship and delicacy of the material leaves little doubt that

these objects were created for parade purposes under the patronage of very wealthy clients. That all of them ended up in rivers or bogs suggests that after their earthly uses they were eventually dedicated to the gods.

From the beginning of the first century BC the volume of insular art increases dramatically and is sufficiently different from what has gone before to warrant a separate stylistic designation – Style V – characterized by tendrils and shapes which are more curvilinear. Tendrils often terminate in trumpet shapes reminiscent of birds' heads and there is now a careful play made between the shape of the motif and the enclosed spaces of the background (Stead 1985b, 22). Many different classes of objects were ornamented in this style: scabbards, shield bosses, mirrors, torcs and a variety of horse gear. Style V was truly *the* style of the British Late Iron Age.



Figure 18.27 Bronze shield from the River Witham in Lincolnshire (actual length: 1.12 m) (photograph: British Museum).



Figure 18.28 Bronze shield boss from the River Thames at Wandsworth (actual length: 360 mm) (photograph: British Museum).



Figure 18.29 Detail of incised and repoussé decoration on a circular bronze shield boss from the River Thames at Wandsworth (overall diameter of boss: 325 mm) (photograph: British Museum).



Figure 18.30 The Torrs pony cap, Kirkcudbright. The cap is shown here with horns, once terminals of drinking horns, attached. The horns do not belong to the cap as it was originally designed for use (photograph: National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh).



Figure 18.31 *Bronze helmet from the River Thames at Waterloo Bridge (actual size 205 mm in diameter at base) (photograph: British Museum).*

The production of parade gear continued throughout the first centuries BC and AD. Two famous pieces, the helmet from Waterloo Bridge and the shield from Battersea, both dredged up from the Thames, serve as a demonstration. The Waterloo Bridge helmet ([Figure 18.31](#)), found in 1868, consists of a cap made from sheets of repoussé-decorated bronze to which are attached two horns also of sheet bronze, each terminated by a separately cast button. The decoration, of slack asymmetric tendril motifs partially filled in with areas of hatching carried out with a rocked tracer tool, was constructed around six discs scored to take roundels of red enamel or cupric glass. Stylistic similarities between the helmet decoration and a group of gold torcs found in eastern England would suggest a date in the first century BC.

The Battersea shield came to light in 1857 and has been subject to an exhaustive analysis (Stead 1985a; Jope 2000, 65–9) which leaves entirely open the question of date. However, while it shows a certain overall similarity to the Witham shield, the waisted form of the body and the rigid symmetrical design suggest Roman influence. Similarly, the technique of pressing semi-molten red glass into the openwork roundels, which are then attached by means of pitch and rivets, is

more appropriate to the immediate pre-Roman period. If this late dating is accepted then the Battersea shield can be seen to be one of the last of the great parade artworks to be made before the Conquest; it would stand at the end of a tradition lasting at least three centuries which must have provided a livelihood for generations of master-craftsmen, as well as inspiration for many lesser men.

The works which have been mentioned so far were essentially the masterpieces of the east British workshops but it would be wrong to give the impression that all art was the preserve of the very wealthy. Throughout the first centuries BC and AD there developed a large number of centres producing specialized artefacts, sometimes enlivened with decorative motifs, which would have been within the aspirations of a much larger percentage of the population. Swords provide a good illustration of the point. From the fourth century swords came back into fashion once more, replacing daggers as the general-purpose weapon (Figure 18.32). Stylistic and structural consideration of the later Iron Age sword types has allowed a number of groups to be recognized, each occupying a fairly distinct geographical region (S. Piggott 1950). Some types had a much wider distribution than others and many styles, once developed, remained in use up to the time of the Roman Conquest, but there can be little doubt that several well-defined regional schools were at work serving the needs of their local communities. Some swordsmiths were sufficiently proud of their work to stamp their blades with identifying marks like the boar figures on the swords from Isleham, Cambs., and West Row, Suffolk (Stead 1985b, 49–50).

Much the same pattern is suggested by the study of other luxury goods. Brooches, mirrors, tankards, bowls and a wide range of harness-trappings must all have been produced by specialist craftsmen skilled in the art of bronzework and enamelling, and capable of practising, and sometimes developing, the elements of the insular British art style. Where and how these men worked is at present uncertain but the discovery of bronzeworker's tools at South Cadbury, Somerset, points to the existence of a workshop inside the hillfort, and a survey of sheet bronze-working has suggested a distinct concentration on hillforts including Danebury and Maiden Castle (Northover 1988). In all probability, each of the large nucleated centres was capable of supporting one or more full-time specialists, but this need not imply that all craftsmen were attached to sedentary communities. The occasional discovery of hoards of scrap metal like that from Ringstead in Norfolk and the foundry waste discovered at Gussage All Saints, Dorset, Weelsby, S. Humbs., and Beckford, Heref. and Worcs., is a reminder that the itinerant craftsman may well have continued to play a part in late pre-Roman Iron Age society.

Among certain classes of metalwork it is at last becoming possible to distinguish the products of specific workshops, if not of individual craftsmen. A dramatic illustration of this is provided by the torcs of gold and electrum found mainly in eastern England and best known from three famous hoards at Snettisham, Norfolk, Ipswich, Suffolk (Figure 18.33), and Ulceby, Lincs. Besides the 180 or so torcs from Snettisham ten other separate sites in west Norfolk have produced examples in gold, silver and electrum (Sealey 1979; Davies 1996, figure 8 and p. 92). Others have come from further afield, from Clevedon, Somerset, Needwood and Glascote (Tamworth), Staffs., and Netherurd, Peebles. (Figure 18.35). The actual form of the torcs varies: they may be tubular, or of twisted rods, plaited rods or braided strands, while the terminals are either plain loops or decorated with cast curvilinear ornament.

A range of structural and stylistic peculiarities serves to interrelate the group so closely that it is difficult not to consider them as the work of one school. On those with decorated terminals, for example, there are three distinctive elements: curved ridges, filling in the style of 'matting' and small spherical bosses sometimes decorated with finely executed punch-marks, while notched ridges occur less frequently. These stylistic tricks are found on most, except the examples from Bawsey and Ulceby. But the Bawsey torc, with its simple two-strand twisted body and plain loop terminals, is of a kind found in the Ipswich hoard, while of the two torcs from Ulceby one, with double-loop terminals, is paralleled at Snettisham, the other of plaited rods is similar to one found in the Ipswich hoard. Admittedly, the structural similarities are less decisive than the decorative links but the overall impression to be gained from these comparisons is of a single production centre in the first century BC specializing in the manufacture of gold-work for the immensely rich aristocratic market of East Anglia. The fact that the Waterloo Bridge helmet shares many decorative techniques in common with the torcs might hint at some diversification of output.

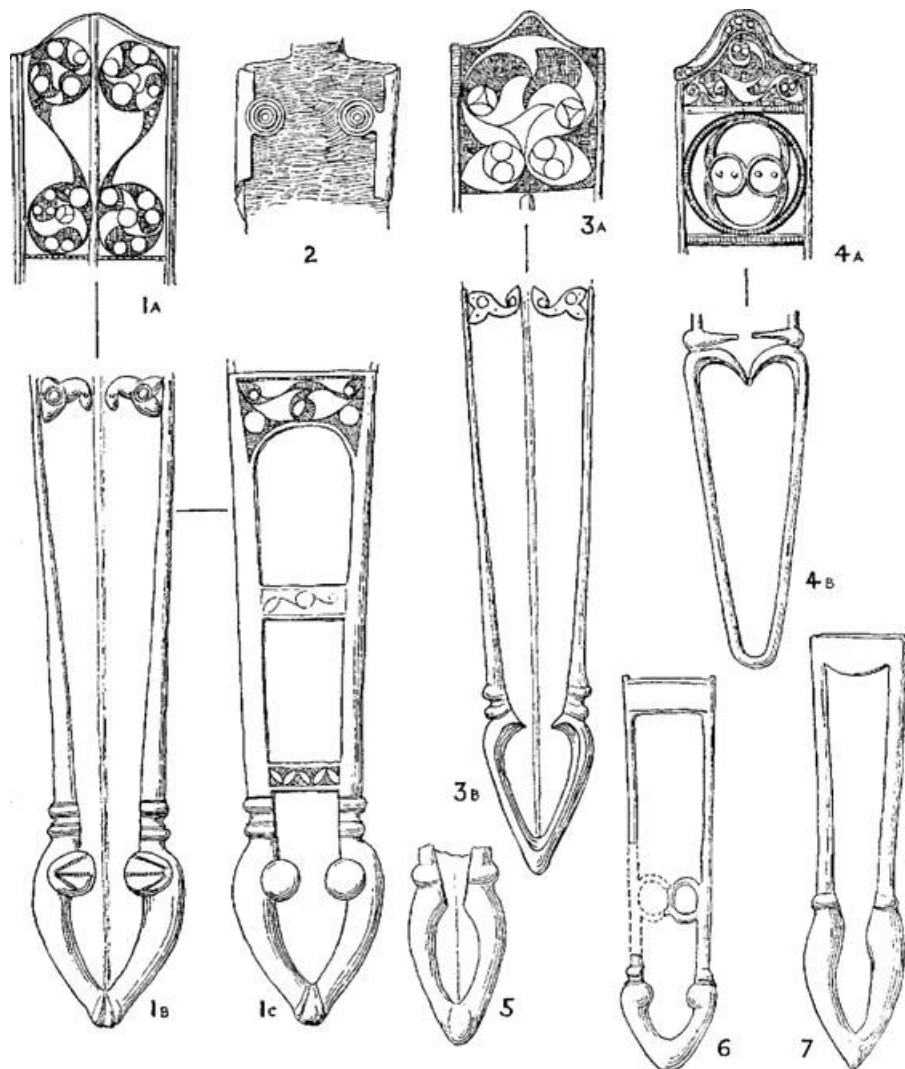


Figure 18.32 British La Tène swords: 1,2 Hunsbury, Northants; 3 Meare, Somerset; 4 Amerden, Bucks.; 5 Woodeaton, Oxon.; 6, 7 Spettisbury Rings, Dorset (source: reproduced from S. Piggott 1950).

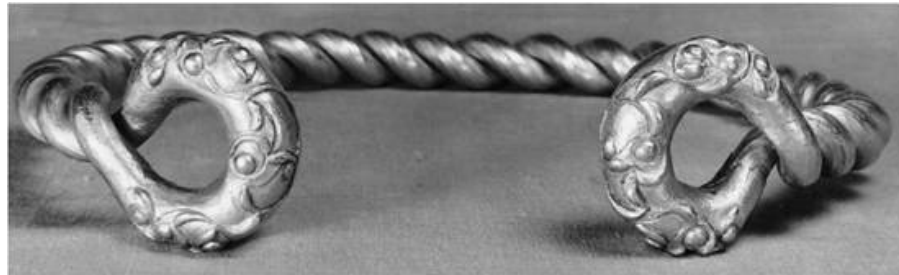




Figure 18.33 Gold torcs from the Ipswich hoard, Suffolk (various scales but approx. 185 mm in maximum diameter) (photographs: British Museum).



Figure 18.34 Terminal of gold torc from Sedgford, Norfolk (photograph: British Museum).

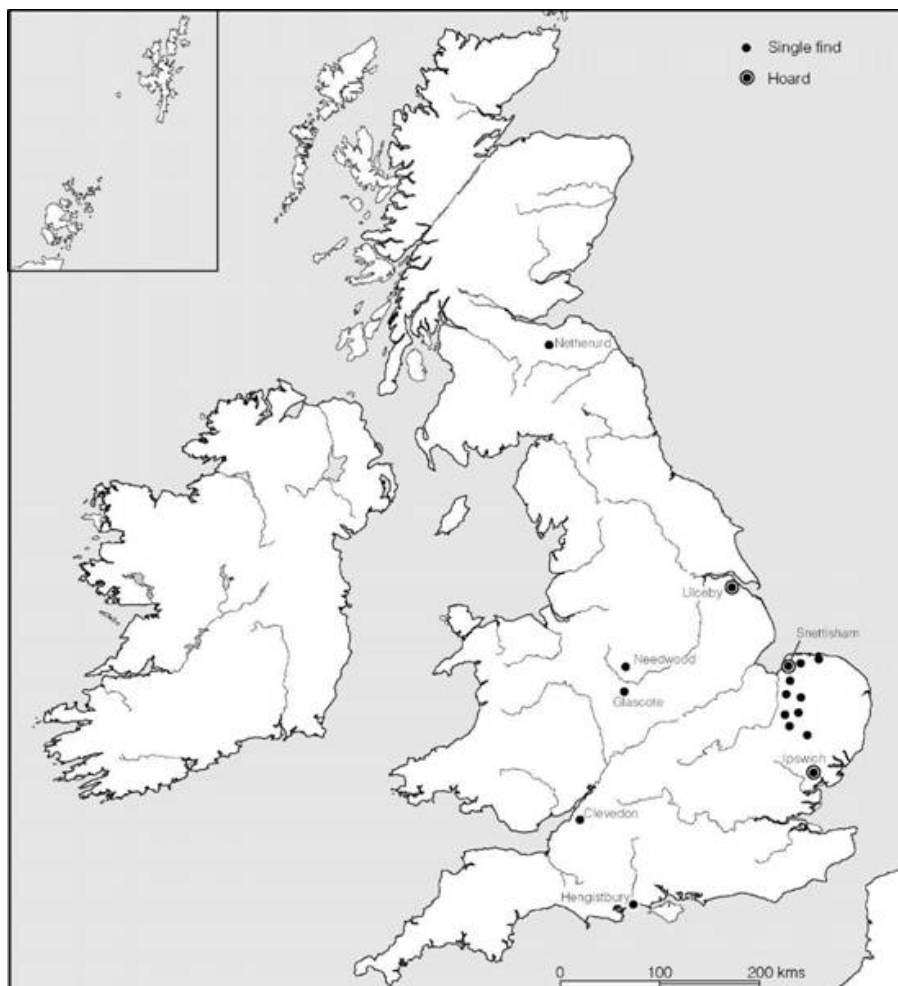


Figure 18.35 *Distribution of gold and electrum torcs (sources: various).*

A rather less exotic class of bronze neck-rings, somewhat later in date than the Snettisham–Ipswich types, can be defined in the south-west (Megaw 1971): these have been called the Wraxall class, after the best example of the group. Their main characteristic is that the neck-rings were cast in two separate halves which were then hinged together at one end and provided with a simple clasp at the other. The cast decoration was further enhanced with incisions to bring out the main theme of elongated S-curves set against dot-filled backgrounds. In all, some seven examples are known, all single finds and all coming from south-west Britain: one from Somerset, one from Wales, one from Cornwall and four from Dorset. Together they must represent the output of a somewhat second-rate workshop producing for a local market probably in the first century AD.

These two examples, the East Anglian gold torcs and the south-western bronze neck-rings, show that the regional distributions of some of the craft schools or workshops are capable of definition by stylistic analysis where sufficient distinctive material is available. By the first century BC, however, the workshops had proliferated to such an extent that copying between one craftsman and another had become widespread and it is doubtful if the work of many more of the individual schools will ever be isolated with any degree of certainty.

Coinage

The production of coinage, which became increasingly common after the beginning of the first century BC, must have involved the work of specialists. Whether or not metal was extracted by them is a matter for debate but the cupellation hearths and block of copper-silver alloy found at Hengistbury Head, Dorset, may have resulted from the activities of moneyers. Their principal task would have been the measuring of the correct amounts of raw metal using scales, of which several have been found (Van Arsdell 1993), and the production of blanks by melting down the mixture in the clay 'coin moulds', examples of which have turned up on a number of sites. The blanks would then have been struck individually between pairs of dies. The basic production method required relatively little technical skill but analytical work has shown that great care was taken to control the actual metal content, the relative proportions of gold, silver and copper being adjusted to obtain the desired colour (Van Arsdell 1989). Weights were also very finely controlled, the progressive diminutions being so slight as to be unnoticeable. Die cutting was in the hands of men of great skill and while it was once thought that the classical motifs, favoured by Tincommius and Verica, implied Roman or Gaulish die-cutters it can now be shown that the design and creation of the dies used in Britain was almost certainly the work of British craftsmen (Van Arsdell 1989) (Figure 18.36).

Not all coins were struck; some were cast in clay moulds none of which survives, but a study of the Potin coins of Kent (Allen 1971; Van Arsdell 1983, 1984) has suggested the use of relatively simple multiple moulds, which would allow a strip of coins to be cast in one process. For the conventional types of cast coins, however, more complex techniques must have been adopted.

The production of coins was the last of the craft skills to be developed in Britain before the Roman Conquest. It embodied old techniques such as the extraction, alloying and casting of metal, but in addition it required much that was new: careful measurement, the development of engraving – often of high artistic merit – and an

awareness of literacy. The sophistication of techniques fossilized in the production of a coin symbolized the complexity of the social and economic system for which the artist-craftsman of the first century BC was now working.



Figure 18.36 The craftsmanship of the die cutter as exemplified by British coins: 1 Atrebatian uninscribed gold stater; 2 Cunobelin bronze unit; 3 Cunobelin gold stater; 4 Caratacus silver unit; twice actual size (photographs: Institute of Archaeology, Oxford).

19

Warfare

‘The whole race’, wrote Strabo, ‘is war mad, high-spirited and quick to battle.’ This generalized picture of the Celt is one repeated many times by other classical writers and there is no reason to suppose that the British tribes were in any way different: weapons are not infrequently found, massive fortifications abound and bodies with battle wounds are by no means uncommon (Dent 1984). Here we will review some of the archaeological evidence for the aggression before attempting to assess how war-torn, if at all, was the life of the Britons during the Iron Age.

Weapons and armour

The principal weapons were swords and daggers, spears and slings. In Britain swords have a long ancestry: fine examples were being manufactured in bronze in many parts of Britain, particularly the south-east, throughout the Late Bronze Age, and as we have seen above (p. 449) the introduction of the Hallstatt C Gündlingen type in the eighth century was widely accepted by British swordsmiths who soon responded by developing variants of their own. How long these Hallstatt long swords continued in use it is impossible to say on the evidence from Britain alone. There is no reason to suppose that they were short-lived, but on the Continent, in late Hallstatt and early La Tène times (c. 600–400 BC), daggers and short swords were more frequently found accompanying warrior burials. Short swords are rare in Britain but daggers seem to have become popular among the élite, as the remarkable collection of high-quality weapons recovered from various parts of the Thames amply demonstrates (pp. 466–7). It is possible, therefore, that fashions in Britain followed those of the Continent.

By the end of the fifth or beginning of the fourth century, long swords, now of iron, became common again and from this time forward the sword was once more the principal weapon. The early swords of La Tène I type were comparatively short, measuring between 50 and 65 cm long, but by La Tène III times the norm was 70–90 cm. There was also a change in shape. The earlier varieties had

tapering blades with long sharp points designed for both thrusting and slashing, while the later swords, with their longer parallel sided blades, were better adapted for slashing. Clearly a change in fighting methods is indicated. One possibility is that the La Tène III slashing sword was designed for fighting from horseback ([Figure 19.4](#)). The mounted warrior is depicted on several British coins, and Gaulish cavalry are known to have been a great nuisance to Caesar during his campaigns in France in the mid-first century BC.

In Britain most of the known swords have been recovered from rivers where they were ritually deposited, but a few warrior burials have been discovered (pp. 555–7). These provide some indication of the normal equipment of the warrior. At Grimthorpe, Yorks., and Owslebury, Hants, each dead man was accompanied by his sword, spear and shield; at North Grimston, Yorks., the burial contained two swords and a shield; at Whitcombe, Dorset, and at five graves from Burton Fleming, North Humberside, a sword and a spear, but no shield, were interred; another of the Burton Fleming graves, however, was accompanied by a sword and seven spears (Stead 1985b, 44). Of the two male burials with vehicles from Wetwang Slack, Yorks., one was equipped with a sword, seven spears and a shield, the other with a sword and possibly a shield. The sample is too small to allow patterns of grave sets to be recognized but the norm of sword, shield and one or more spears is clear enough.

Spears, javelins and lances feature prominently in the archaeological record and are illustrated on some British coins. Caesar also makes specific reference to them in his *Conquest of Britain* (*BG* IV, 24). The spear thrown in volleys at the beginning of an engagement was an effective weapon for it could not only maim and kill but, by piercing the shields of the defenders and remaining lodged there, it could greatly encumber the opponent and might cause him to throw away his shield. Thus the prime function of the spear was for use as an artillery weapon in the opening stages of an engagement. The lance, used for thrusting, was essentially a cavalry weapon and is sometimes depicted as such on coins.

The other weapon of considerable importance in southern Britain was the sling. Slings could easily and cheaply be made from a strip of leather while ammunition, usually rounded pebbles from rivers or beaches, was readily available. The prime purpose of the sling seems to have been as a defensive weapon, frequently associated with hillforts. Huge hoards of slingstones have been found in pits close to the main entrances of Maiden Castle and Danebury, while the defence of the gates of both forts, and no doubt others, was greatly enhanced by carefully placed platforms from which bands of slingers could command the approaches. The sling could be used in two modes,

swung in a vertical plane it could send volleys of stones into the air to rain down on attackers at some distance, while used in a horizontal swing stones could be sent at considerable velocity into a body of troops accurately at head height with devastating effect.

It seems quite probable that the sling came into its own in Britain in the Middle Iron Age in parallel with the emergence of strongly defended hillforts and it has long been argued that multi-vallation was a local response to the increasingly sophisticated use of the sling. The earliest evidence for the widespread use of slings in relation to hillforts, however, comes from Danebury, where large quantities of slingstones have been recovered from just behind the ramparts in a fifth-century BC context. Slingstones, sometimes of baked clay, occur at earlier dates on settlement sites but these could have been used in more domestic pursuits such as hunting or driving off predators from flocks and herds.

The popular image of the Continental Celt in battle is of a naked warrior protected only by his shield, helmet and neck torc, a vision based on certain classical references and also upon depictions on Celtic coins and Greco-Roman sculpture. To what extent this practice was adopted in Britain we are unlikely ever to know, but the existence of shields and helmets is well attested. The Iron Age shield was made of leather or wood or a resilient combination of the two, and on rare occasions was faced with bronze as for example in the case of the shields from Witham, Battersea and Chertsey. In shape they were invariably sub-rectangular or oval. They were held in the left hand by means of a centrally placed grip fixed across a circular opening which was covered by an umbo of wood, leather or metal to protect the knuckles. In British contexts the only surviving parts are the metal fittings, edge binding of bronze, umbos of bronze or iron and, rarely, the facing sheets of bronze. Strictly speaking we should distinguish two types of shield – the functional shield of wood and leather with plain metal fittings like those found in the warrior burials and the parade shield faced with bronze and with elaborately tooled bronze embellishments. The famous Battersea shield is the prime example of this type, and so too are the elaborate shield bosses found in the river Thames at Wandsworth ([Figures 18.28](#) and [18.29](#)). Heavily adorned examples of this kind would have been cumbersome in battle.

A fascinating insight into the form of the more commonly used British shield is provided by a number of small model shields recovered from a hoard near Salisbury, Wilts. (Stead 1993). For the most part these shields have gently bowed long sides with deeply incurved tops and bottoms. The models also show clearly the edge bindings that were used. Actual bronze bindings have been found on a dozen or so sites in south-eastern Britain, including accompanying an

élite burial at Deal, implying the widespread distribution of shields of this kind (Stead 1993, figure 22).

Of helmets we know comparatively little. Two have been found in Britain: the horned helmet from Waterloo Bridge and the helmet from the Meyrick Collection, the provenance of which is unrecorded (Jackson 1995). Diodorus Siculus gives a vivid description of Continental Celtic head gear (V, 30).

On their heads they wear bronze helmets which possess large projecting figures lending the appearance of enormous stature to the wearer. In some cases horns form one piece with the helmet while in other cases it is relief figures of the fore parts of birds and quadrupeds.

Representations of helmets of this kind are clearly to be seen on a number of coins and, most dramatically, on the famous Gunderstrup cauldron from Denmark. The Waterloo Bridge helmet clearly fits with this general description and it is quite probable that many of the little bronze boar figures found in Britain once adorned helmets, affording the wearers some symbolic protection (Foster 1977). As with the shields it is possible that we should distinguish between aristocratic parade helmets of bronze and more normal, functional, head protection of leather. A well-padded helmet of thick hide would have been far more effective in deflecting a blow than a thin sheet of bronze.

Diodorus Siculus also mentions that some of the Continental Celts wore chain mail for protection. A number of examples have been found in Britain (Gilmour 1997). The earliest, from the vehicle burial at Kirkburn, near Garton Slack in Yorkshire, dates to the third century BC. Other examples have come from the élite burials of Lexden, Folly Lane and Baldock and date to the late first century BC and early first century AD. Fragments have also been found elsewhere, at the fortified sites of Stanwick and Maiden Castle and the sanctuaries of Woodeaton, Oxon., and Hayling Island, Hants.

One other weapon of warfare which should not be overlooked is noise. In his description of the battle of Telamon fought in Italy in 225 BC Polybius gives a frightening description of a pitched battle: The Roman forces, he tells us

were terrified by the fine order of the Celtic host, and the dreadful din, for there were innumerable hornblowers and trumpeters and, as the whole army were shouting their war-cries at the same time, there was such a tumult of sound that it seemed that not only the trumpeters and the soldiers but all the country round had got a voice caught up in the cry.

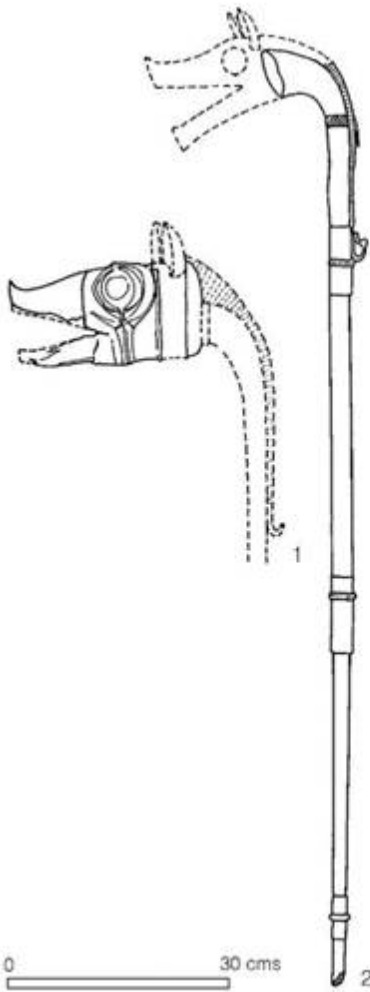


Figure 19.1 War trumpets: 1 The head from Deskford, Banff., restored as a carnyx-mouth; 2 the carnyx from Tattershall Ferry, Lincs., restored (source: S. Piggott 1959).

Diodorus Siculus provides a little more information about the war trumpets. ‘They are of a peculiar barbaric kind; they blow into them and produce a harsh sound which suits the tumult of war.’ Clearly both writers are referring to the carnyxes so vividly illustrated on the Gunder- strup cauldron and less clearly on the coins of Tasciovanus, Cunobelin, Eppillus and Dubnovellaunus (Allen 1958, 44–5). Two actual examples are known from the British Isles, one from the river Witham at Tattershall Ferry and one from Deskford, Banff. (Figure

Chariots

The earliest first-hand account of Britons as a fighting force is provided by Julius Caesar describing his opening encounter in the summer of 55 BC.

We ran the ships ashore on a flat and open beach. But the natives had discovered our intention. They had sent on ahead their cavalry and the chariots which they regularly use in battle. The rest of their troops came on behind and were stopping our men landing.

(BG, IV, 23–4)

From this succinct introduction, and from subsequent accounts, we can build up a clear impression of the tactics used by the inhabitants of south-east Britain in the mid-first century BC. They possessed three forces: infantry, cavalry and charioteers, who seldom fought in close formation but usually attacked in open order interspersed with groups of reserves to cover the retreat or to relieve the fighters when they began to tire. Caesar found that fighting such a foe was difficult, not least because he seems to have been unused to dealing with chariots which were deployed in large numbers: Cassivellaunus was said to have had 4,000 under his control. Admiration for the flexibility of the British chariot caused Caesar to pause in his narrative to give a detailed description of them which deserves quotation in full.

These are the tactics of chariot warfare. First they drive in all directions hurling spears. Generally they succeed in throwing the ranks of their opponents into confusion just with the terror caused by their galloping horses and the din of the wheels. They make their way through the squadrons of their own cavalry, then jump down from their chariots and fight on foot. Meanwhile the chariot drivers withdraw a little way from the fighting and position the chariots in such a way that if their masters are hard pressed by the enemy's numbers, they have an easy means of retreat to their own lines. Thus when they fight they have the mobility of cavalry and the staying power of infantry: and with daily training and practice they have become so efficient that even on steep slopes they can control their horses at full gallop, check and turn them in a moment, run along the pole, stand on the yoke and get back into the chariot with incredible speed.

(BG, IV, 33)

British tribes were evidently wedded to this kind of warfare. Queen

Boudica relied on chariots to strengthen her rebellious army in AD 60, and in Scotland, twenty-five years later, Calgacus employed them in his final attempt to stop the army of conquest commanded by Agricola.

Archaeological evidence for chariots is widespread throughout the British Isles. Actual two- wheeled vehicles, possibly of the war chariot kind, have been recorded in a number of Yorkshire burials, most notably at Wetwang Slack and Garton Slack (below pp. 546–9), while metal fittings from the vehicles or their harnesses have been found in most regions ([Figure 19.2](#)). These include items such as linchpins, yoke-mounts like the decorative bulls from Bulbury and the ‘yoke-terminals’ from Brentford (Middx.), High Cross (Leicester) and Llyn Cerrig Bach as well as the many hundreds of terret-rings once attached to yokes. Several examples of nave bindings, also possibly from chariots, are known. Horse-trappings, including bridle-bits (Palk 1984), strap-buckles, rings and the unique pony cap from Torrs (Kirkcudbright.) are even more widespread ([Figure 19.3](#)).

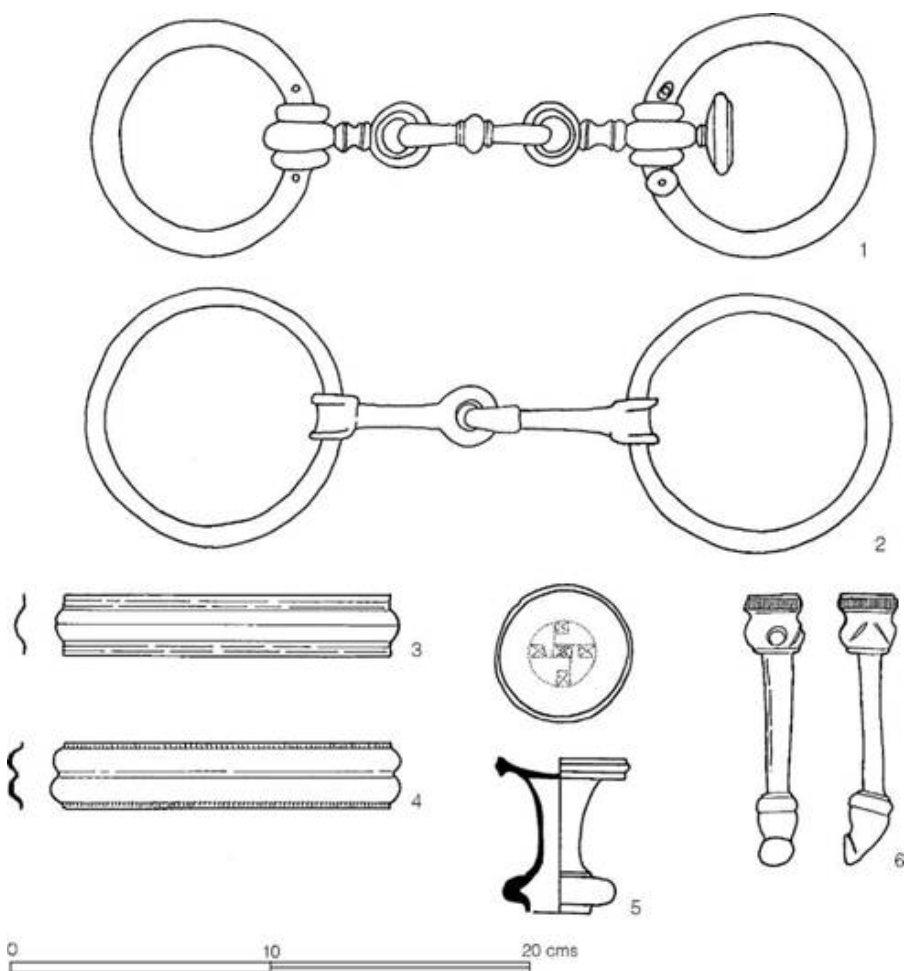


Figure 19.2 Chariot- and harness-fittings from Llyn Cerrig Bach, Anglesey: 1, 2 bridle-bits; 3, 4 nave- bindings; 5 yoke-mount; 6 linchpin (source: C.F. Fox 1946).

A fascinating insight into the social and technical background of chariots comes from the settlement site of Gussage All Saints, Dorset, where a dump of founder waste was found representing the manufacture of about fifty sets of vehicle- and harness-fittings together with evidence for ironworking and a number of metalworking tools (Fell 1988). This, combined with the evidence suggesting that young horses may have been rounded up for training, points to the possibility that the settlement was producing trained chariot teams and their vehicles, presumably as an input into the system of gift-exchange and patronage.

At what stage war chariots were introduced into Britain is unclear.

Horse-riding and vehicles are well attested in the Hallstatt period (pp. 449–56) but there is no evidence to suggest that chariots were in use this early. It is more likely that the light two-wheeled vehicle was introduced during the La Tène I period in the late fifth or early fourth century. Thereafter, as we have seen, it remained in use into the first century AD in Scotland. In Ireland it survived for several centuries more.



Figure 19.3 Set of harness-fittings found together in a house at Danebury, Hants (scale: $\frac{2}{3}$) (photograph: Institute of Archaeology, Oxford, Danebury Trust).

Defensive architecture

In previous chapters we have considered in some detail the wide range of settlement enclosures found in various parts of Britain. These range from comparatively slight ditches defining settlement areas to the massive fortifications of hillforts like Maiden Castle. Enclosure itself does not necessarily imply the need for defence. Ditches and fences would have been erected for a variety of reasons, ranging from the desire to keep domestic animals away from the settlement area to the social need to define status or to offer a visible threat (Sharples 1991c). The fact that ‘defensive’ enclosures tend to increase in number in most parts of the country through the Middle and Late Iron Age has frequently been ascribed to an increase in aggression: while this may be so, we must allow that other social explanations may have played a part.

This said, the hillforts do seem to be in a different category: choice of position, massiveness of defences and the sheer defensive ingenuity

lavished on the entrances is sufficient to suggest that their enclosure works were designed to proclaim the strength of the occupants and to withstand attack. To this may be added the evidence for sling defence mentioned above. Caesar, writing of the Gauls and Belgae, provides a direct insight into the methods used by Continental Celts to reduce a native hillfort.

They begin by surrounding its entire wall with a large number of men and hurling stones at it from all sides. When this has stripped the wall of its defenders, they hold up their shields to provide a protective shell, set fire to the gates, and begin to undermine the wall.

(BG, II, 6)



Figure 19.4 Warriors on British coins: 1 horseman with a carnyx, Tasciovanus gold stater; 2 horseman with sword and rectangular shield, Tasciovanus gold stater; 3 horseman with sword and round shield,

Cunobelin bronze unit; 4 horseman, Epaticcus gold stater; four times actual size (photographs: Institute of Archaeology, Oxford).

The vulnerability of the gate, implied in this passage, explains why so much attention was paid to providing complex foreworks at many hillfort entrances in central southern Britain (Avery 1986).

That some of the forts actually came under attack is more difficult to prove but layers of burning associated with entrances and defences at several sites are suggestive. At Danebury, for example, both entrances showed signs of burning in the fourth century, and at the end of the Middle Iron Age, c. 100 BC, the main east entrance was burnt again; thereafter the site was largely abandoned. The burning of massive gate timbers 70 cm across could hardly have been accidental. But while the most likely explanation is enemy action we cannot completely rule out a symbolic act of closure on the part of the community.

The nature of warfare

That the natives of Britain engaged in warfare before the arrival of Caesar is certain. The evidence of the hillforts alone is sufficient to show this, and to this may be added several war cemeteries associated with hillforts (Whimster 1981, appendix L). In addition a number of isolated burials show evidence of wounding, sometimes fatal. Most dramatic are the burials from Burton Fleming and Wetwang Slack found with spearheads embedded in their body cavities (Dent 1984). Elsewhere, at Danebury, Rotherley, Gussage All Saints, Harlyn Bay, etc., wounds, usually to the head, are all too evident.

In what social context these injuries took place it is impossible to say with certainty, but something of the nature of Continental Celtic warfare can be deduced from the classical sources and this may have relevance to Britain. Warfare was endemic and could flare up at any time, but it was not the all-out, long-term affair we read of in Gaul at the time of Caesar's conquest: the presence of Roman armies of conquest created an unnatural situation.

Classic Celtic warfare was a means of establishing social position. At an individual level it was the status of the war leader who could encourage an entourage to follow him in a successful raid; at the group level, it was a demonstration of the prowess of the tribe or clan in maintaining or extending the territorial boundaries in a manner considered to be appropriate to their standing. An example is provided by the Helvetii, who occupied modern Switzerland. They were hemmed in by natural barriers which 'meant that they could not range over a wide area and had great difficulty in making war on

neighbouring tribes. Since the Helvetii enjoyed fighting they bitterly resented the restriction' (*BG* I, 2). Tacitus makes the same point about the Germans when he says that they regarded it as essential to their well-being that they maintained a zone of devastation around their borders.

Warfare, therefore, was in the form of a raid. Raids could be on an individual level against a specific settlement or group of settlements, they could be intertribal or they could range wider as did the Celtic war bands who left their homes in the Po valley and attacked the Roman sphere south of the Apennines in the fourth and third centuries. Whatever the scale, the aim was the same – the gaining of plunder and prowess.

The conduct of battle must have varied considerably with time and place. Raids against property would have led to attacks on farmsteads and hillforts, the circumstances dictating the progress. In more general conflict involving opposing forces in the open, a certain standard procedure can be discerned. The two hordes would face each other across a field of battle with the women and children behind the men, standing on baggage carts to get a good view of the proceedings. The conflict was opened with the warrior heroes from each side driving in their chariots along the enemy's front ranks hurling abuse and challenges. Then the field would clear so that individual contests between champions could begin. Once this stage had been completed, either the result would have been evident, in which case the proceedings were at an end, or a general *mêlée* might break out. At any event hostilities would cease at nightfall.

Although there would have been frequent deviations from this norm, the model of the archaic Celtic battle, constructed from various classical sources, is likely to have held good in many regions distant from the distorting influences of the Mediterranean world. To what extent it was relevant to Britain it is impossible to say, except to point out that aggressive behaviour of this kind is not dissimilar to the picture provided by the vernacular Irish literature of the first millennium AD.

It is difficult to bring the generalized Continental Celtic pattern of warfare into direct and useful juxtaposition with the archaeological evidence from Britain except possibly in relation to hillforts. Their development as defensive structures can strictly be divided into two phases, an early phase, roughly 600-400 BC when early hillforts were numerous and widespread, and a late phase c. 400-100 BC when a more restricted zone of strongly developed hillforts emerged. Since both types were (among other things) a response to warfare it could be argued that they bear witness to a phase of widespread but intermittent raiding covering much of the country, followed by a

crystallizing out of socio-economic zones in one of which, the centre south, raiding persisted and may even have intensified, while in parallel there was a greater nucleation of power and population at fewer strongly defended locations. In such a scenario we might imagine allegiances between certain groups of hillforts, but a flexible pattern changing with time.

This is not to imply that the other socio-economic zones of Middle-Late Iron Age Britain were free from stress. The sword burials of Yorkshire and the speared bodies at Burton Fleming and Wetwang Slack indicate a level of aggression but this is impossible to quantify. Similarly the strongly defended homesteads stretching along the western seaboard of Britain and much of the north-east imply that defences were desirable, but this may be more for social reasons than for military necessity. All we can safely say, therefore, is that while the inhabitants of Britain were in a perpetual state of endemic warfare the communities of the central southern zone probably enjoyed it to an aggravated degree.

The widespread abandonment of hillforts in the south-east in the first century BC presents an interesting phenomenon. It coincides both geographically and chronologically with the development of organized long-distance trade with the Continent. The most satisfactory way to explain this change is to suppose that the acquisition of rare prestige goods imported from the Continent provided a new and acceptable method of status display, rendering obsolete traditional means based on warrior prowess. As the raiding party gave way to the trader's caravan so hillforts were abandoned in favour of markets at route nodes.

Beyond the coin-issuing zone of the south-east lay a vast tract of land untouched by the direct effects of the Late Iron Age trading systems. From this zone raw materials and manpower, in the form of slaves, would have been procured to feed the demands of the new south-eastern economic system. Thus raiding, now to provide slaves, would not only have continued but would probably have intensified. It is possible that the warrior burials of Yorkshire and the carved chalk figurines of warriors (Stead 1988) ([Figure 20.22](#)) are a reflection of increasing aggression caused by these changes.

By the time that the Claudian armies sailed to Britain the communities of the south-east had lost much of their socially motivated aggression and were easily overrun within a year. Those to the north and west were made of sterner stuff: it was forty years before Rome could regard them as conquered.

Beliefs and behaviour

The evidence available for studying the belief systems of Iron Age communities is varied both in quantity and quality and in its geographical spread across the country. Among the various categories, the most prolific is direct evidence for the disposal of the dead which comes not only in the form of regular burials but in the less tangible traces of excarnation. Other displays of belief are reflected in a varied array of deliberate depositions thrown into rivers, lakes or bogs or placed in the ground in specially dug holes or in existing pits or ditches. To this may be added a few disparate literary references concerned largely with the Druids and the less tangible assumptions which can be drawn from the limited place-name evidence. Together this array of sources offers the impression of a highly complex belief system pervading the everyday life of the people and even present in their perception of landscape.

Burial rituals

It has frequently been said that little trace survives of the burials of the Iron Age period in Britain, and by comparison with the large cemeteries of Continental Europe, this might at first sight appear to be so, but when the material evidence is amassed, a well-defined series of ritual practices can be distinguished which can be seen to change over time and to show variation reflecting both long-established regional traditions and the external influences (Whimster 1977, 1981). Standing back from the array of available evidence we may define three broad chronological stages: the eighth to sixth centuries when, for the most part, the Late Bronze Age preference for cremation was coming to an end; the fifth to first centuries when a complex of practices involving inhumation and excarnation are to be found across the country; and the first century BC-first century AD when cremation burial was reintroduced into the south-east. It will be convenient to present the discussion of burial practice in these three chronological stages.

The eighth to sixth centuries BC: the end of the

cremation tradition

In the first part of the first millennium BC the principal recognizable method of disposing of the dead was cremation, the ashes being buried, either urned or un-urned, in cemeteries which sometimes originated at the sites of older barrows. Occasionally ashes were buried under individual barrows, usually much smaller than those of the second millennium. These practices continued throughout the seventh, sixth and probably fifth centuries. Many urnfields show signs of continued use and, in all probability, most of the old-established burial grounds were maintained well into the sixth century. Since, however, many of the later cremations were buried without grave-goods or pottery containers, there is nothing with which they can be dated unless by a series of radiocarbon assessments.

The disposal of the dead in urns placed under small individual barrows is well attested in the seventh to fifth centuries. Sometimes cemeteries of barrows are found, like the small group of round barrows on Ampleforth Moor, Yorkshire ([Figure 20.1](#)), which have produced pottery characteristic of the seventh century together with two confirmatory radiocarbon dates. The barrows were simple, ranging from 7.3 to 9.7 m in diameter and less than 1.5 m high; each was surrounded by a shallow ditch. Burial was by means of cremation: each was placed in a small pit or scattered on the original ground-surface. Other apparently isolated barrow burials are known across southern Britain. Beneath slight mounds at the Caburn, Sussex, Buntley and Creting St Mary, Suffolk, and Warborough Hill, Norfolk, ashes have been found in pottery urns of the Kimmeridge-Caburn type, indicating a date in the eighth to sixth centuries. Burials of this kind are direct descendants from preceding Bronze Age traditions.

Inhumations of this early period are much rarer. One possible example has been found under a barrow at Beaulieu Heath in the New Forest, Hants. The barrow, barely 4.6 m in diameter and surrounded by an irregularly cut ditch, was built of turf and survived to a maximum height of 0.6 m. On the original ground-surface beneath the mound lay the remains of several wooden planks, a bronze ring, smaller fragments of bronze, two small pieces of iron and a sherd of a coarse-shouldered jar of Early Iron Age type. While no interpretation can be offered with assurance, it is *possible* that the remains represent a cart burial of Hallstatt type, the bones of the inhumation having been totally destroyed by the acidity of the soil.

A second, though ill-recorded, inhumation burial was discovered at Ebberston in Yorkshire in 1861 and briefly reported to a meeting of the British Archaeological Association held in that year. The account describes a bronze sword (of Hallstatt C type) and its chape, found 'together with another sword and a quantity of human bones'. Both

swords were broken into four pieces. It is impossible to be sure now of the nature of the find, but the apparent ritual breaking of the weapons is a feature which can be paralleled among Continental burials and might be thought to support the suggestion that the Ebberston deposit was a genuine inhumation in Hallstatt C style. If so, it is the only example yet known in Britain.

A surprising difference exists between Britain and the Continent in the eighth and seventh centuries. On the Continent most of the Hallstatt swords known come from burials, whereas in Britain all except for Ebberston come from rivers. One possible explanation of this phenomenon is that in Britain the dead were cremated and disposed of, with their equipment, in rivers. This would account both for the riverine distribution of swords and chapes and the relative lack of burial grounds. Such an hypothesis is impossible to prove but the ritual is well attested among more recent societies and need occasion no surprise.

The fifth to first centuries: inhumation traditions

By the fifth century BC the cremation tradition had been largely replaced by inhumation, but practices varied considerably across the country. Two distinct regional rites can be recognized, in Yorkshire and in the south-western peninsula. But elsewhere the evidence is more diverse and more scattered. Here, although some regular cemeteries are known, bodies and body parts are frequently found in 'domestic' contexts suggesting a more complex *rite de passage* involving excarnation. In the first century BC and early first century AD, after the rite of cremation had begun to be widely adopted in the south-east, inhumation and occasionally cremation burials, accompanied by swords and shields or by mirrors, are found sparsely distributed over most of the south and east of the country. It will be convenient to describe these various traditions separately.

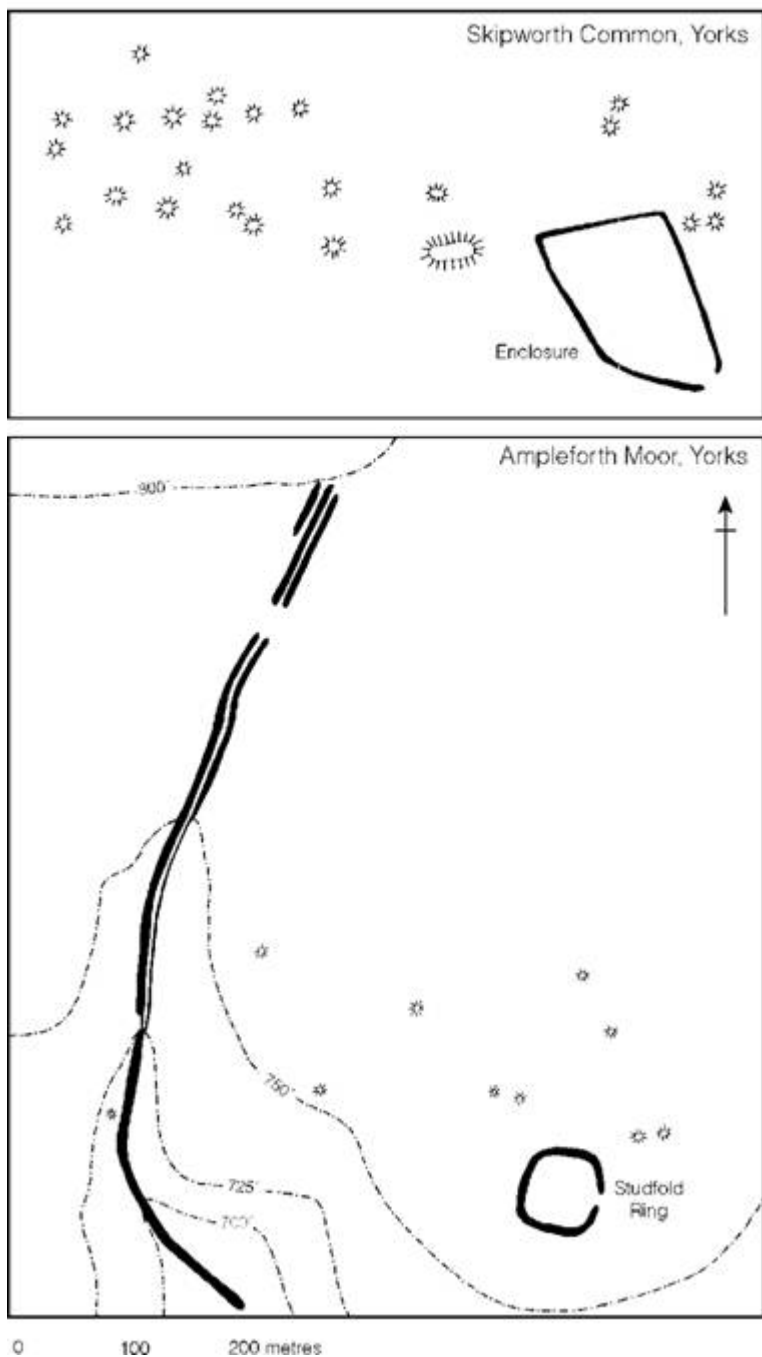


Figure 20.1 Yorkshire cemeteries (sources: Skipworth Common, Stead 1961; Ampleforth Moor, Wainwright and Longworth 1969).

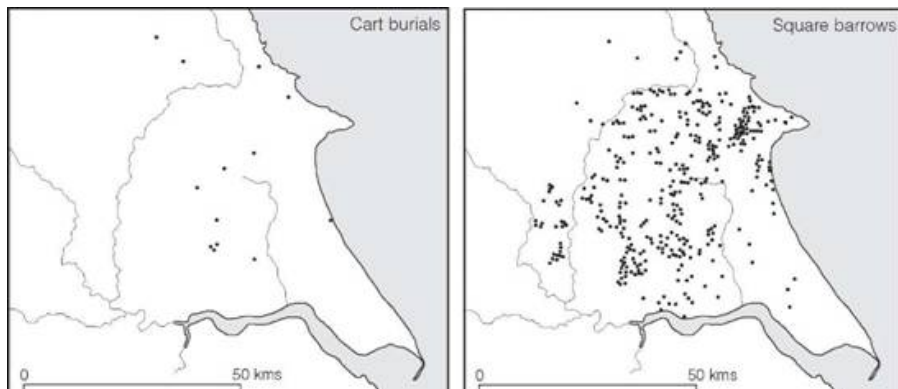


Figure 20.2 *The Arras burials in Yorkshire (source: Ramm 1978 with additions).*

In Yorkshire, a new and quite distinctive burial practice appeared in the late fifth century and forms part of what is referred to as the Arras culture (pp. 84–6). Close similarities with burial traditions in northern France are strongly suggestive of a cultural link between the two regions. Until comparatively recently the Arras culture was represented almost entirely by its burials (Stead 1979, 1991; Dent 1982, 1985). Three separate ritual practices are represented: the grouping together of small barrows in large cemeteries; the occasional rite of vehicle burial; and the practice of surrounding individual barrows with a rectangular ditched enclosure. Many barrow cemeteries are known (Figure 20.2), ranging from small clusters to larger groups such as Eastburn (75), Scorsborough Park (170), Dane’s Graves (up to 500), and Burton Fleming (500+). The individual barrows were usually small, up to 9 m across, and normally covered crouched inhumations, although very occasionally extended inhumations and even cremations have been found. In many cases the barrows were surrounded by circular ditches but cemeteries of rectangular ditched barrows are becoming increasingly common as aerial surveys proliferate (Ramm 1978; Stead 1979, 29–35; Mytham 1995).

Generally the burials were without elaborate grave-goods but some were provided with brooches and joints of pork. Richer graves occur sporadically, and more rarely mortuary vehicles were buried with the dead. The vehicle burial at Dane’s Graves (Figure 20.3) lay beneath a barrow some 8.2 m in diameter in a rectangular grave-pit about 0.8 m deep and measuring 2.6 by 2.3 m. The deposits consisted of two crouched inhumations laid on the bottom of the pit together with the remains of a dismantled cart and several items of harness-fittings. The ‘king’s barrow’ at Arras was a little larger, covering a circular grave-

pit some 3–3.5 m in diameter, in which had been placed a single extended inhumation with the bodies of two horses, one laid on either side. The wheels from the vehicle had been removed and propped against each of the horses while the harness-trappings, including two harness-loops, five terret-rings and two horse-bits, were placed together with the two linchpins in the western half of the grave. Close to the head of the burial had been placed two pigs' heads, presumably as an offering to the spirit of the deceased.

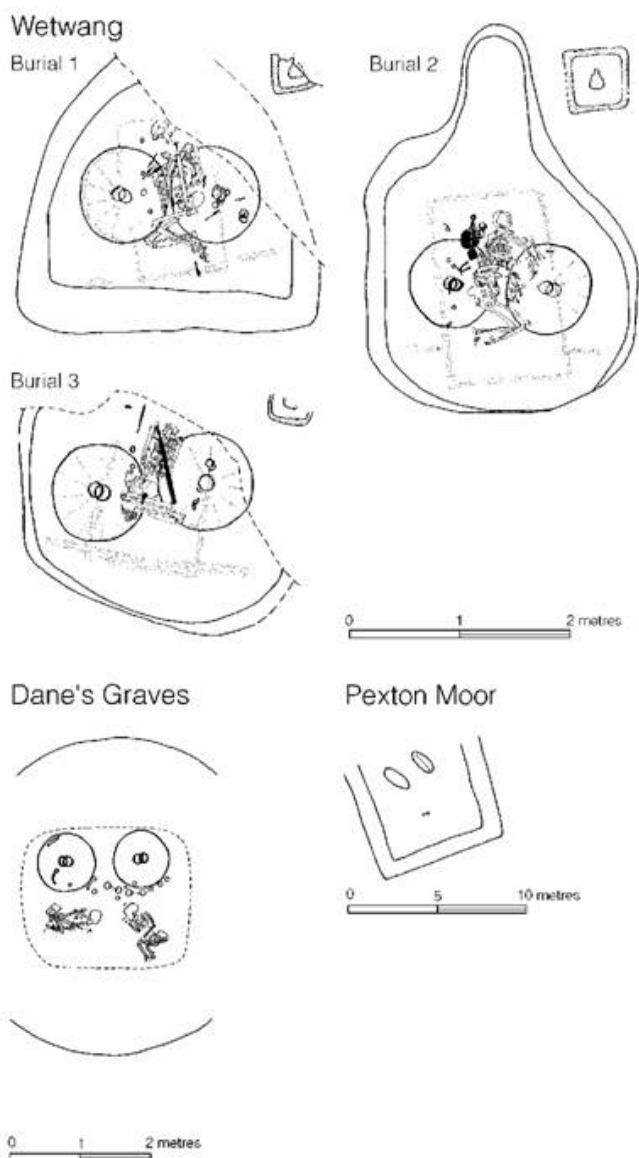


Figure 20.3 Vehicle burials from the Arras culture (sources: Dane's Graves

and Pexnton Moor, Stead 1965; Wetwang Slack, Dent 1985).



Figure 20.4 *Burial from Wetwang Slack, Humberside (photograph: Bill Marsden).*

Another example of a vehicle burial, one of the few to be excavated under modern conditions, was found at Garton Slack, near Driffield, in 1971. Here the inhumed body had been placed on the bottom of the grave-pit and covered with the funerary cart. The two twelve-spoked wheels had been removed and laid on either side of the body. The grave-goods included the harness- trappings, consisting of two bits, five terret-rings and four buckles, a whip and a pig's head as an offering.

In 1984 three remarkable vehicle burials were discovered in close proximity to each other at Wetwang Slack (Figures 20.3 and 20.4). All three were buried in pits set beneath rectangular ditched barrows. In each case the body was flexed and was placed together with grave-goods in a box structure, presumably the body of the vehicle, above the two wheels of the cart which had been dismantled and laid side by side on the ground beneath. Burial 1, that of a young male, was accompanied by chariot- and harness-fittings, a long sword, seven spears, iron coverings for the spine of a wooden shield and the

forequarters of a pig. In Burial 2, in addition to the vehicle and harness parts, there were personal possessions, including a mirror, a decorated bronze box of cylindrical form with a chain for suspension, and a gold and iron pin decorated with coral. Two forequarters of pig were placed over the stomach of the dead person. The third burial, like the first, was accompanied by weaponry - a large iron sword, together with its suspension rings and iron fittings for the shield. With such a comparatively small sample available for study generalizations are difficult, but it is tempting to contrast the warrior equipment of Burials 1 and 3 with the essentially female equipment of Burial 2. This might suggest that the vehicle rite was associated with status rather than gender.

Another vehicle burial was discovered in the same area, at Garton Station, in 1985. Here the ritual differed from the others mentioned in that the wheels were placed together upright against the side of the grave-pit. Some 400 m from Garton Station, at Kirkburn, another vehicle burial was identified and excavated in 1987. The wheels had been dismantled and laid on the base of the grave, with the body placed at the junction of the two wheels with legs flexed. A coat of iron mail armour had been placed over the body with two groups of pig bones. The wooden yoke had been laid along the west side of the corpse. It was covered by a rectangular barrow surrounded by a ditch.

In 2001, yet another vehicle burial was found at Wetwang village during the course of building work. The vehicle had been taken apart, with the yoke laid at the north end of the grave and the axle at the south end. Between were the wheels placed flat on the bottom of the grave-pit, with the box of the vehicle, containing the body, next to it. The corpse, a mature female, was arranged in a crouched position accompanied by an iron mirror and joints of pork.

As will be apparent from the above discussion, most of the vehicles found in the Arras graves had been dismantled at the time of burial, but at Pexton Moor the cart was buried intact, with its wheels set into two oval pits dug into the bedrock ([Figure 20.3](#)). The barrow in this example was also surrounded with a rectangular ditched enclosure.

The principal elements of the Yorkshire cart burials can therefore be seen to be inhumation - either extended or contracted - the burial of the mortuary cart itself, the deposition of some or all of the harness-fittings, the occasional ritual sacrifice and burial of the horses, and the provision of some personal ornaments and food offerings, usually pork. These features can all be paralleled among contemporary Continental burials, but the rarity of pottery and weapons in the Yorkshire group serves to distinguish the area. It should, however, be stressed that the Wetwang Slack and Garton Slack cart burials were simply the élite element buried in a much larger cemetery running for

more than a kilometre along the valley bottom ([Figure 20.5](#)), the 'normal' burial rite being simple inhumation in a small pit surrounded by a rectangular ditch. Grave-goods, if they occurred, were restricted to small items of personal equipment such as brooches. The burial evidence from the Yorkshire cemeteries is rich in detail reflecting on ritual and difference in status. At several sites including Garton Station and Rudston there is clear evidence that corpses had been speared in the grave using a particular type of insubstantial spear. Why this was deemed necessary is a matter of speculation. Elsewhere, while the 'richer' burials were provided with joints of pork, others, of lesser status, were buried with mutton (Stead 1991). Clearly there is much to be learned from differences of this kind but often the link between observation and explanation is difficult to make with assurance.

Apart from the Arras group in Yorkshire, evidence for cart burial elsewhere in Britain is rare, though not entirely absent. At Mildenhall, Suffolk, an extended inhumation was found, possibly under a barrow, accompanied by a long iron sword, an axe and a gold torc and flanked by the skeletons of two horses. No fittings of a cart appear to have been found, but the discovery was made some years ago and is ill-recorded; the likelihood that significant details passed unnoticed is extremely high. An even more interesting burial was found at Newnham Croft, Cambs., where a contracted inhumation was recovered accompanied by three brooches, one of which was penannular, a bracelet, part of what may be the head-harness for a pony and four simple bronze rings. Dating cannot be precise but on stylistic grounds the decorated bracelet is thought to belong to the fourth or third century. Again, there is no positive evidence for a cart. A third example comes from Fordington, just outside Dorchester in Dorset, where the bones of a man and a horse were found in 1840 together with a bronze bit of Iron Age type. Finally at Newbridge, just west of Edinburgh airport, a vehicle burial of the fifth to fourth centuries BC was discovered. The vehicle was intact when buried, with the lower parts of its wheels set in pits in the base of the grave. The fact that only four possible cart burials have been found outside Yorkshire is a fair indication that the rite was not widely adopted in Britain but the recognition of square barrows at Kirkby la Thorpe, Lincs., and Diddington, Cambs., suggests that some elements of the Arras burial rite might have been adopted more widely in eastern England.

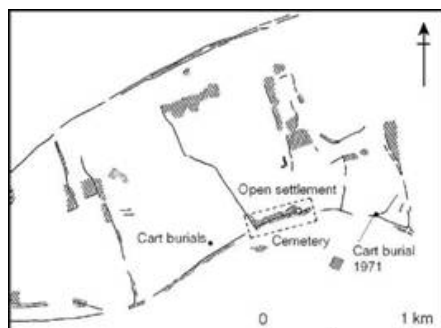
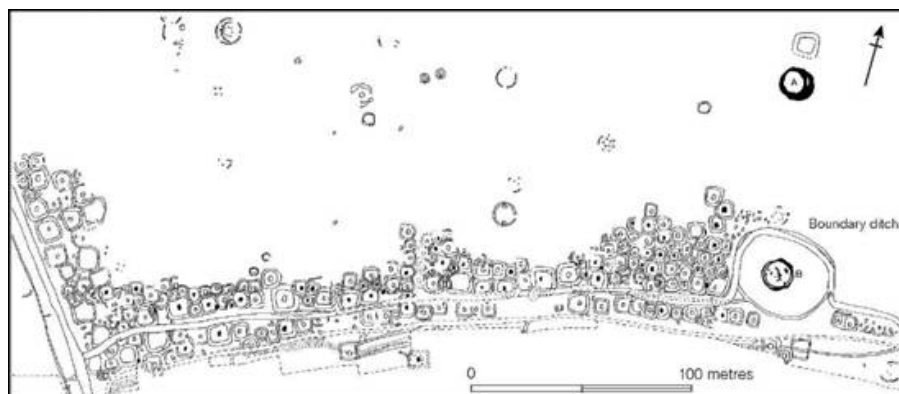


Figure 20.5 *The cemetery and settlement at Wetwang and Garton Slack, Humberside (source: Dent 1982).*

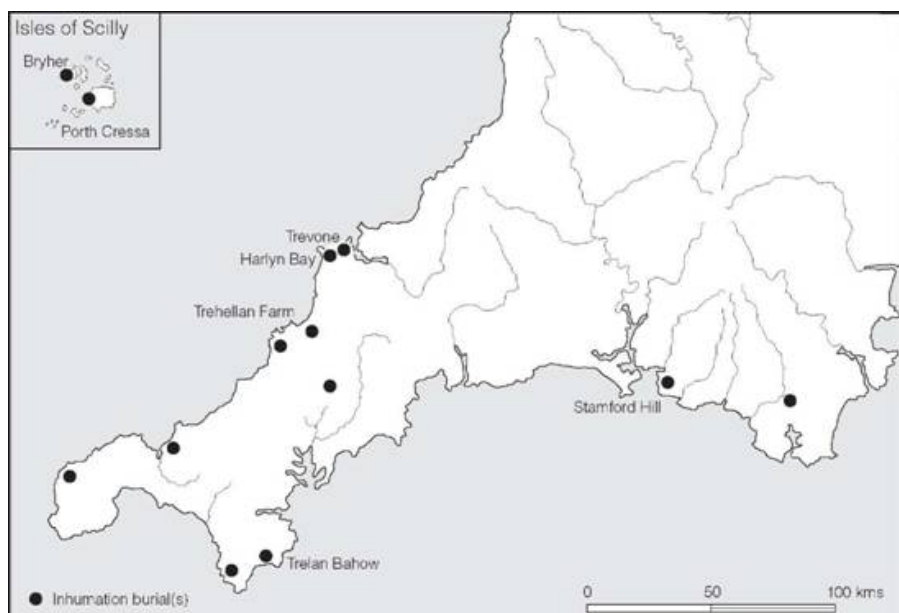


Figure 20.6 *Inhumation cemeteries in south-western Britain (source: author).*

In south-western Britain a distinctive regional burial practice can be distinguished involving inhumations buried in individual graves. Five cemeteries have so far been identified (Figure 20.6): Mount Batten in Devon, and Harlyn Bay, Trelan Bahow, Trevone and Trehellan Farm in Cornwall. The older finds were poorly recorded, but useful details are provided by the cist excavated at Trevone in 1955, the re-examination of part of the Harlyn cemetery (Whimster 1978) and the thorough excavation of a small cemetery of some twenty-one burials at Trehellan Farm, Newquay, in 1987. The bodies were usually, though not invariably, buried in crouched positions, the graves were often lined with stone slabs (though not at Trehellan Farm) and were roughly arranged in rows, and there was a distinct preference for siting cemeteries within sight of the sea. Grave-goods frequently accompanied the dead, but were usually restricted to personal equipment such as pins, bracelets and fibulae, though occasionally more expensive items such as mirrors, necklaces and bronze vessels were included. One burial found at Bryher on the Isles of Scilly contained a mirror as well as a shield and a sword but this may reflect a different and more widely spread tradition (below, p. 557). The surviving material from these south-western burials suggests a date range spanning the Middle and Late Iron Age from the fourth century BC to the mid-first century AD.

Cist burials are recorded sporadically from other parts of Britain. In Wales, for example, the famous bronze ‘hanging bowl’ (now thought to be the lid of a vessel) from Cerrig y Drudion, Clwyd, was found in a cist which may have been constructed originally for burial, while in Scotland many of the burials which can, on the basis of their grave-goods, be assigned to the Iron Age have been found in cists, either isolated or arranged in cemeteries as at Cairnconan, Angus. Inhumations of this kind continued in use into the second and third centuries AD.

Over much of south-eastern Britain evidence of careful burial in cemeteries is by no means common, though human remains are frequently found on settlement sites in a variety of contexts. Before considering what this may mean in terms of belief systems and ritual a brief review of the highly varied evidence must be offered.

Three regular cemeteries have recently been identified, at Yarnton, Oxon., Kemble, Glos., and Suddern Farm, Hants (Figure 20.7). All were of Middle Iron Age date and contained a number of crouched inhumations in shallow graves. The burials were usually unaccompanied, apart from one individual at Suddern Farm who was

buried with an iron brooch. The Kemble cemetery was small, comprising only five burials; Yarnton produced thirty-five or so interments in two main clusters, while Suddern Farm was significantly larger but only a small sample has been excavated.

It is quite possible that cemeteries of this kind were fairly widespread and may be found at the fringes of many of the settlements in the region. The fact that so few have yet been identified may simply reflect the emphasis that has been placed on the excavation of the actual settlement nuclei rather than the peripheral zones around them.

The habitation sites themselves normally produce human remains deposited in pits, ditches or occupation accumulations within the settlement. The human remains include complete burials, burials of partial but articulated bodies, and isolated human bones. Such deposits are a common feature found throughout the south-east of Britain. A few examples will suffice to give an idea of the range. On a number of settlement sites, both open farms and hillforts, complete articulated bodies have often been found tucked away in disused storage pits ([Figure 20.8](#)). In most examples the body lies flexed, often quite tightly, on the pit bottom close against one side of the pit, and in a number of the better-excavated examples heavy stones have been recorded over the body. Occasionally these pit burials have been found to pre-date rampart extensions, as at Hod Hill and Maiden Castle in Dorset, in situations suggestive of foundation burial, but more normally pit burials are found scattered at random throughout the settlement areas. This rite was widespread throughout central southern Britain and appears to be represented in all areas where storage pits were dug.

A number of settlement sites in the south-east have produced evidence of what might superficially appear to be more casual treatment of dead bodies. Isolated human bones are frequently found in rubbish deposits and in some cases articulated parts of human carcasses have been found in pits along with other occupation debris. At Wandlebury, Cambs., for example, a child's body less the legs was apparently wrapped in a cloth or sack and thrown into a pit, while at Danebury limbs and pieces of human trunk occur sporadically. In one case at Danebury, a deliberate deposit was created in a specially dug elongated pit in which had been placed three legs, part of a trunk and a lower jaw. Unlike the other pits, this one had been left open for some time, the fragments of body remaining exposed to view. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that the deposit had ritual overtones.

Another factor of some significance is the apparent interest shown in the human head ([Figure 20.9](#)) (a matter which will be returned to below). On several occupation sites skull fragments are noticeably

more common than other human bones. Thirty-two fragments of human skulls were found at All Cannings Cross, Wilts., four of which had been deliberately shaped, one perforated for suspension, the others polished by use. Similarly, at Lidbury, Wilts., a piece of cranium had been carefully shaped and perforated. It must be assumed that skulls were selected for special treatment, which eventually resulted in token pieces being retained by individuals, perhaps as good-luck charms.



Figure 20.7 Part of the Middle Iron Age cemetery at Suddern Farm, Hants (photograph: Danebury Trust).



Figure 20.8 Pit burial from Danebury, Hants (photograph: Danebury Trust).

Clearly what we are observing in the evidence of the disposal of human remains in central southern Britain is a pale reflection of highly complex belief systems and the rites associated with them (Cunliffe 1995, 72–9; 2000, 128–34). The most likely explanation of the disparate data presently known is that the *rite de passage* surrounding death involved a period when the body of the deceased was exposed, perhaps on a platform in a specially defined area. Excarnation of this kind has been widely practised in the past and still features in parts of the world today. In such a system exposure may be conceived of as a temporary stage – a liminal period while the spirit was still hovering – after which formal burial may have taken place. If the bodies had been bound and wrapped on death the still-wrapped remains might then have been taken down at the end of the liminal period and interred in graves dug in designated cemeteries. Alternatively they could have been carried into the settlement for special burial, perhaps as part of propitiatory rites. Some such explanation would also accommodate the partial bodies and isolated bones found within the settlement area.

A normative mode, involving excarnation followed by burial or reincorporation, could explain the existing evidence, but that alternative scenarios may account for some deposits should not be overlooked. Some of the bodies in pits could have been deliberate sacrifices, while skulls might have been trophies of enemies (below, p. 570). Similarly, partial bodies could represent localized episodes of

violence or desecration, or even insult cannibalism. All these activities are reflected in the literary accounts of Iron Age society in Europe. To distinguish precisely the context of deposition is seldom possible, and depositions, apparently similar, may be the end products of quite different acts.



Figure 20.9 *Skull burial from Danebury, Hants (photograph: Danebury Trust).*

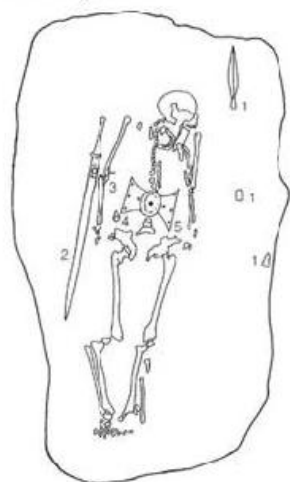
While the great majority of burials from south-eastern Britain conform to this broad type there are a few isolated exceptions. At Bromfield, Salop, an extended inhumation accompanied by a brooch of La Tène I type, a ring and a pendant was found surrounded by a circular ditch, while at Great Houghton, Northants, a shallow circular pit contained a crouched inhumation buried wearing a lead torc around the neck. These examples reflect differences in regional behaviour which may well prove to be widespread.

Finally it is necessary to consider what appears to be a distinctive burial rite adopted throughout the south-east of Britain from the late second century BC until the Roman invasion. The rite involves burial of an élite individual accompanied by weapons appropriate to a

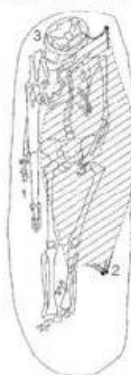
warrior or by mirrors and sometimes bowls more appropriate to female burials.

The warrior burials form a distinctive group, characterized by the rite of male inhumation accompanied by weapons, the bodies being placed in single graves without barrows (Collis 1973) (Figures 20.10 and 20.11). The largest concentration of warrior burials is to be found in Yorkshire at North Grimston, Bugthorpe, Grimthorpe, Kirkburn, Rudston, Garton Station, etc. It is a tradition which clearly grows out of the élite burial practices of the fourth and third centuries BC. While many of the warrior burials in this region were comparatively modest, a few like North Grimston, Bugthorpe and Kirkburn, by virtue of the high craft skill lavished on the swords and sheaths, must have been warriors of high status.

Owslebury, Hants



Mill Hill, Deal, Dorset



Whitcombe, Dorset



- 1 Iron spearhead, ferrule and bronze strip
- 2 Iron sword
- 3 Bronze rings from sword belt
- 4 Silvered bronze belt hook
- 5 Bronze shield boss

- 1 Sword
- 2 Shield
- 3 Diadem
- 4 Brooch

- 1 Bronze fibula
- 2 Circular belt hook
- 3 Iron spearhead
- 4 Circular lump of chalk
- 5 Iron sword
- 6 Iron tool
- 7 Iron hammer
- 8 Broken bronze object

0 50 100 cms

Figure 20.10 Warrior burials from Owslebury, Hants, and Whitcombe, Dorset (source: Collis 1973) and Mill Hill, Deal, Kent (source: Parfitt 1995).

Elsewhere in the country warrior burials are far less common, but examples have been found at Shouldham, Norfolk, Owslebury, Hants, St Lawrence, Isle of Wight, Mill Hill, Deal, Kent, Whitcombe, Dorset, and Bryher, Isles of Scilly. The warrior at Owslebury was provided with a long iron sword in a wooden sheath, together with the rings and scabbard hook for attaching it. By his side was a spear, broken so as to fit into the grave. The body was covered by a wooden or leather shield of which the central bronze boss now survives. The burial at Mill Hill, Deal, was rather more elaborate. He too had a sword and shield, but the sword was in a sheath decorated with bronze while the shield was bronze bound and with a decorated boss. The dead man wore a bronze crown with engraved curvilinear decoration and was also accompanied by an elaborate brooch, a strap-link and a suspension-ring all decorated with coral knobs. The burial, which probably dates to the second century BC, is the first to be made in a cemetery which continues to develop into the Roman period. The inhumation found in a cist at Bryher offers another variation in that not only was the deceased accompanied by a sword and shield but a decorated mirror was included as well. It is not clear how this should be interpreted but there is nothing inconsistent in allowing that a male possessed a mirror or that a female could be of warrior status.

Parallel with the warrior burials there appear a number of rich female burials, usually characterized by the presence of mirrors, beads, bronze bowls and other trinkets appropriate to female attire (Figure 20.11). One of the best recorded of the group was discovered at Birdlip in Gloucestershire in 1879. Three cist graves were found, the centre one containing the burial of a rich female, with a male on either side. Her body was extended and over her face a large bronze bowl had been placed; a smaller bowl lay near-by. The other grave-goods included a gilded silver fibula, four bronze dress-rings, a bronze armlet, a superb knife with a bronze animal-head terminal, a necklace of amber, jet and marble, and an engraved bronze mirror. The burial at Portesham, Dorset, in addition to the mirror, included a toilet set, brooches, a Roman bronze strainer and an iron knife. The rich female burials at Trelan Bahow, Cornwall, and Mount Batten, Devon, were also interred in cists, placed in larger cemeteries.

In the south-east of Britain, where the rite of cremation became popular in the first century BC and first century AD, a group of mirror burials have been identified, with the deceased cremated and the ashes placed in an urn. At Colchester, Essex, the cremation was contained in a pedestal urn accompanied by a range of accessory vessels. The metalwork, including an engraved mirror, a bronze bowl and a bronze pin, serves to link the grave to the general category of rich female burials. Another was found at Dorton, Bucks. Here the

body was cremated and accompanied by a mirror contained in a wooden box, together with three amphorae, two flagons and a cup; while at Chilham Castle, Kent, in addition to the mirror the cremation was furnished with a pair of La Tène III brooches dating to between 70 and 50 BC.

The tradition of including mirrors with the departed can be traced back to the fourth century at Arras in Yorkshire, where two graves contained mirrors. The graves at Mount Batten, Birdlip, Colchester and Portesham date to the first century AD. Like the warrior burials, there is no need to attach any cultural significance to the type; they merely represent the standard practices involved in burying moderately wealthy women.

There is a third type of inhumation which might be considered sufficiently distinctive to be regarded as involving a separate ritual practice. At Burnmouth in Berwickshire and Mill Hill, Deal in Kent, extended inhumations have been found, each provided with a pair of bronze spoons. In each pair one spoon was marked with a cross, the other had a small hole punched to one side. Spoons of this kind have been found in various parts of Britain. Some occur in contexts which might suggest ritual deposits. At Crosby Ravensworth in Westmorland a pair was discovered by a spring in a bog; at Penbryn in Cardiganshire another pair had been buried under a pile of stones; the river Thames produced a single spoon and some of those from Ireland were probably from bogs. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that these spoons were in some way connected with ritual procedures. If so, it may be that those with whom they were buried were involved in the practice of religion. This is, of course, pure speculation but it is not too much to expect that the graves of the religious leaders of the community may have been distinguished in some way, as were those of the aristocratic class.

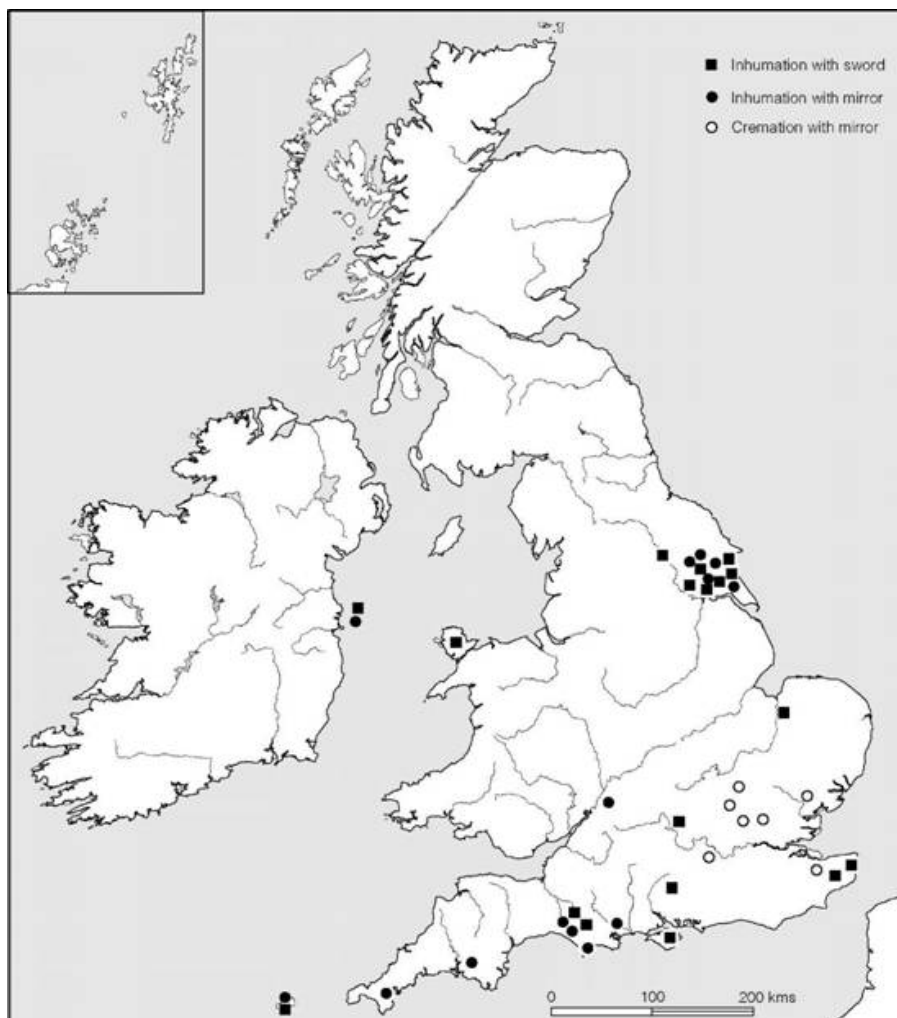


Figure 20.11 *Distribution of burials with swords and mirrors (source: author).*

Over much of the British Isles inhumation remained the basic rite up to the time of the Roman Conquest. In the territory of the Durotriges, for example, a group of victims of the Roman advance were hastily buried in a cemetery at Maiden Castle. Even though the military situation was tense, trouble was taken to inhumate the bodies in specially dug graves and to provide them with ritual meals buried alongside in pottery containers. Inhumation rites were very deeply rooted in Durotrigan territory, and even after the Roman Conquest, when cremation became the norm, the bulk of the population continued to be buried in the old inhumation manner (Whimster 1981).

The first-century BC to first-century AD cremation tradition of the south-east

In the south-east, cremation became increasingly common from the beginning of the first century BC. The normal practice was to bury the ashes of the deceased in an urn in a well-defined cemetery area. A wealth differential is clearly reflected in the nature of the ancillary equipment buried with the ashes. The simpler graves were without grave-goods but a number were provided with small articles such as brooches and other personal trinkets. The richer individuals were buried either in or with bronze-plated buckets, and occasionally, as in the case of the rich graves at Aylesford and Swarling in Kent, other bronze vessels were included (pp. 153–4). In Essex and Hertfordshire, a group of extremely rich burials have been defined, characterized by a deep grave-pit containing considerable volumes of wine stored in amphorae together with the vessels and other equipment appropriate to its consumption. The ritual belief behind such aristocratic burials was evidently to provide the dead man (or woman in the case of Dorton) with the means of feasting and amusement in the afterlife to which he or she had been accustomed on earth. Burials of this kind were being undertaken in eastern England from the early first century BC until the Roman Conquest (p. 155).

The most informative of the cremation cemeteries to be excavated in recent years is the site at Westhampnett, West Sussex, where virtually the entire ritual complex has been uncovered ([Figure 20.12](#)). The cemetery comprising 161 cremations represented burial over a forty-year period in the first half of the first century BC. All the burials were arranged around the southeastern circumference of a circular space which was kept open and clear throughout. Just beyond the graves, and concentrating to the west and east of the circle, were a number of X-, Y- and T-shaped features mostly representing the sites of the funeral pyres, while beyond these to the east were four rectangular structures identified as shrines. A single cremation with a timber structure built above it lay at the eastern limit of the site. The spatial organization was precise and was maintained throughout the four decades of the site's use. The cremations were mostly un-urned but may originally have been buried in fabric or leather containers. Careful analysis showed that only a proportion of the cremated bone had been collected from the pyre for burial.

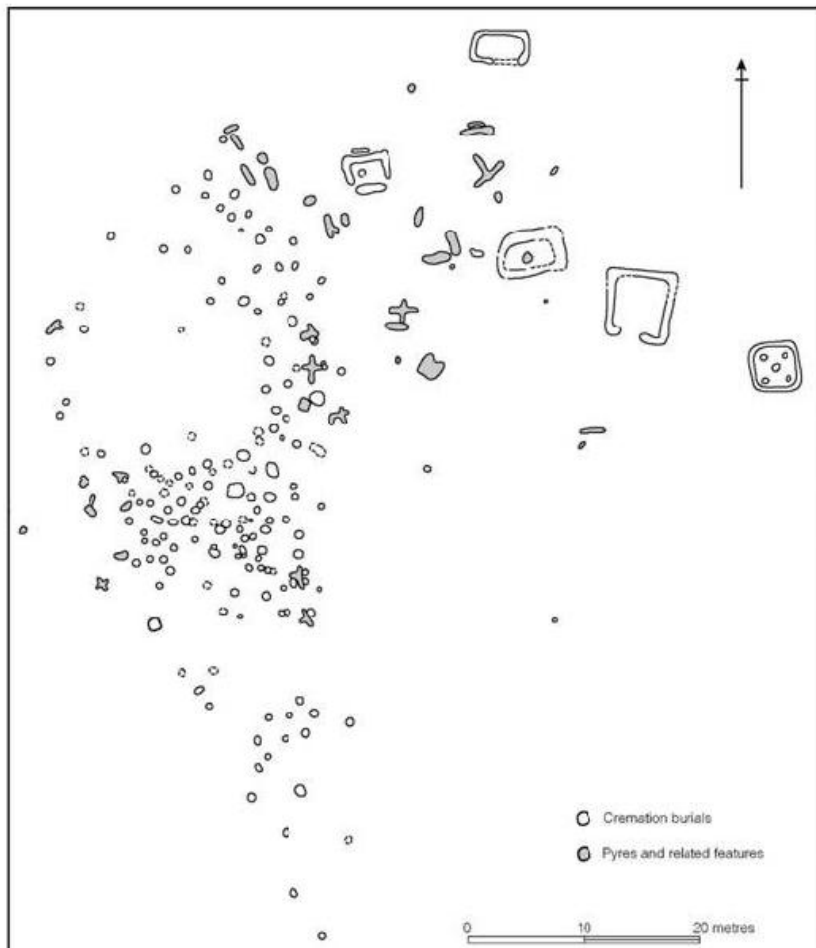


Figure 20.12 *The cremation cemetery at Westhampnett, West Sussex (source: Fitzpatrick 1997a).*

The unusual completeness of the excavation and the array of features discovered allow something of the complexity of the *rite de passage* to be glimpsed: the initial arrival and laying out of the body (quite possibly in the ‘shrines’), the building of the pyre, the act of cremation, the collection of cremated bone, and its final interment. Each stage would have been circumscribed by ritual and quite probably controlled in various ways by the calendar (Fitzpatrick 1997, 236–41). The Westhampnett excavation provides a coherent set of data which allows the process of disposal to be modelled but it is as well to remember that there may have been much regional variation in systems of belief.

In summary, it may be said that the burial patterns recognizable in

the British Isles were complex. Cremation rites in the old Bronze Age style continued over much of the country into the sixth or fifth century but thereafter three distinctive burial zones can be distinguished: in the west cemeteries of inhumations in cists were the norm; in Yorkshire inhumation in barrow cemeteries was common, while in the centre south exhumation and subsequent burial seem to have been widely practised. From the beginning of the first century BC the rite of cremation became established once again in the south-east of the country where cremation cemeteries, sometimes of considerable size, developed: beyond this zone, however, the traditional rites of the Middle Iron Age continued unaffected.

Superimposed upon this regional pattern and chronological development was a separate pattern reflecting the social status of the dead person. Status variations first become apparent among the Middle Iron Age burials of Yorkshire where a certain sector of society was afforded burial rite involving the deposition of a two-wheeled vehicle in the grave. Discrete sets of grave-goods were also used to indicate status and gender. By the beginning of the Late Iron Age these grave-sets (female burials with mirrors and male burials with weapons) are found sporadically in other parts of the country, indicating a change of practice. This was contemporary with, and may in part have been occasioned by, a change in burial rite in the south-east of Britain as social and economic contact with Belgic Gaul intensified. In this area the considerable variations in wealth that could occur in society were closely reflected in grave-goods ranging from the simplest unaccompanied cremation to the conspicuous display of wealth demonstrated by the burials at Lexden and Folly Lane.

Religious and ritual locations

The ritual foci favoured during the Iron Age can be divided into two broad categories: shrines incorporating some kind of man-made structure, and natural locations such as springs, streams or clumps of trees.

The clearest example of the few shrines at present known was found inside a ditched enclosure at Heathrow, Middx., along with a number of domestic buildings (Figure 20.13). The temple consisted of a central *cella*, defined by trenches in which timber uprights had been set, surrounded by an 'ambulatory' constructed of individual close-set posts, the whole building being little more than 10 m square. The similarity between this structure and the later Romano-Celtic temples is so striking that there can be little doubt of the Roman form being modelled upon pre-Conquest styles. At Stansted a rectangular

structure occupying a central position surrounded by circular houses and enclosed in a rectangular ditched enclosure has striking similarities to the arrangement at Heathrow. Another rectangular shrine, similar in many respects to the Heathrow temple, has been uncovered towards the centre of the hillfort of South Cadbury, Somerset (Figure 20.13). The surviving part of the South Cadbury shrine is a small *cella* with an attached porch, comparable in size to Heathrow but apparently without the surrounding ambulatory. Its ritual connotations were further emphasized by the discovery of a number of animal burials in shallow pits lining the approach.

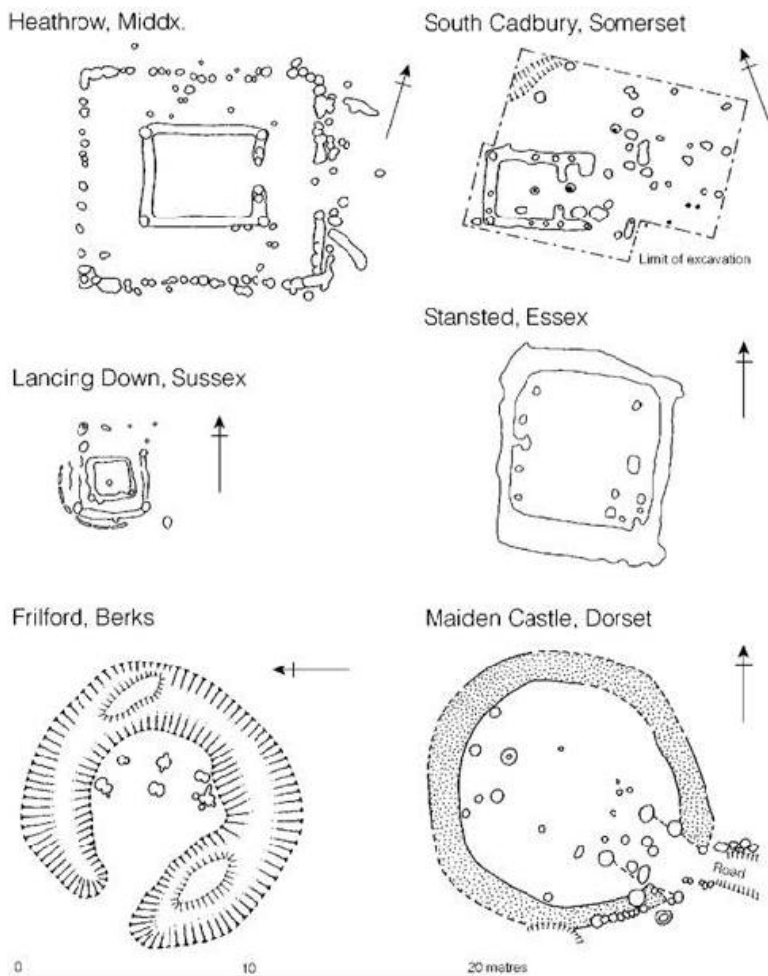


Figure 20.13 Temples and shrines (sources: Maiden Castle, Wheeler 1943; South Cadbury, Alcock 1970; Lancing Down, Bedwin 1981; Heathrow, Grimes 1961; Frilford, Bradford and Goodchild 1939; Stansted, Brooks 1993).

A group of buildings which may have served a religious function has been discovered within the hillfort of Danebury, Hants ([Figures 20.13–20.15](#)). One structure was closely similar to the *cella* of the Heathrow temple. Of the three other buildings which appear to have been associated with it, two were smaller, while the third consisted of a large square fenced enclosure: all were oriented in the same direction towards the entrance of the fort and were sited close to the main road, but no evidence of ritual activity was recognized.

The discovery of four examples of shrines within fortified enclosures raises the possibility that many of the hillforts and other major settlements may have contained defined religious foci, though the religious association of the buildings may not always be apparent. In Maiden Castle, Dorset, the building which is probably a shrine is a simple circular stone-walled structure lying at the end of one of the streets leading into the fort from the east gate ([Figure 20.13](#)). The only hint of ritual activity is an infant burial just outside the door, but the fact that the building was reconstructed in the Roman period alongside a rectangular Romano-Celtic temple is a strong indication of the religious continuity of this particular location. It raises the possibility that many of the Roman temples sited in hillforts may have been constructed on the sites of pre-Roman shrines.

Continuity of this kind is not restricted to hillforts. A sequence of structures almost identical to the Maiden Castle arrangement has been exposed at Frilford, Oxon., where a rectangular and a circular Roman temple were found to succeed an earlier religious centre, the circular Roman building lying above a penannular ditched enclosure of Iron Age date which contained a setting of six post-sockets ([Figure 20.13](#)). Evidently Frilford served as a ritual centre for some decades before the Roman invasion.

The same is probably true of the religious site on Lancing Down, Sussex ([Figure 20.13](#)), where a small rectangular building comparable to the smaller structures at Danebury was found close to a typical Romano-Celtic temple of later date. Direct structural continuity is unproven, but that the site was revered for its religious associations over centuries spanning the Iron Age and Roman period seems likely.

One of the most remarkable examples of religious continuity to be discovered in recent years is the temple on Hayling Island, Hants ([Figure 20.16](#)). The Iron Age complex, built in the second half of the first century BC, consisted of a circular structure set towards the centre of a rectangular courtyard enclosed by a palisade: both elements were closely reflected in the masonry rebuilding which took place in the second half of the first century AD. So close in plan and location were the two structures that there can be little doubt that the Iron Age building was still standing in some form at the time when the

Roman builders moved in. The layer associated with the pre-Roman shrine produced a rich range of votive items including horse gear, spears, fragments of sword scabbards, brooches, tankards, currency bar fragments and almost 100 coins mainly of the Atrebates, Durotriges and Dobunni and from Continental Gaul. The collection provides a unique insight into the range of votive items thought to be appropriate to the unknown deity who was worshipped there.

Continuity is also probable at Harlow, Essex, where an Iron Age deposit associated with pits, post-holes and a circular structure was found beneath a Romano-Celtic temple. More than 230 Iron Age coins were found, many of which are likely to have been deposited in the pre-Roman phase. The numbers are sufficiently large to suggest the presence of a pre-Conquest religious sanctuary dating back to the first century BC. Similar evidence suggestive of continuity comes from a number of Romano-Celtic temples. For example at Worth in Kent a small group of model shields ([Figure 20.17](#)) must be indicative of Iron Age ritual activity but there is little else to indicate the form of the buildings, if any, which constituted the sanctuary. There is also evidence of Iron Age activity pre-dating the Roman shrine at Uley, Glos. In all probability, the continuity of temple locations between the Iron Age and Roman periods will prove to be widespread when the early levels beneath Roman structures are more fully explored.



Figure 20.14 Rectangular buildings, probably of a religious nature, in the hillfort of Danebury, Hants (source: Cunliffe 1984a).

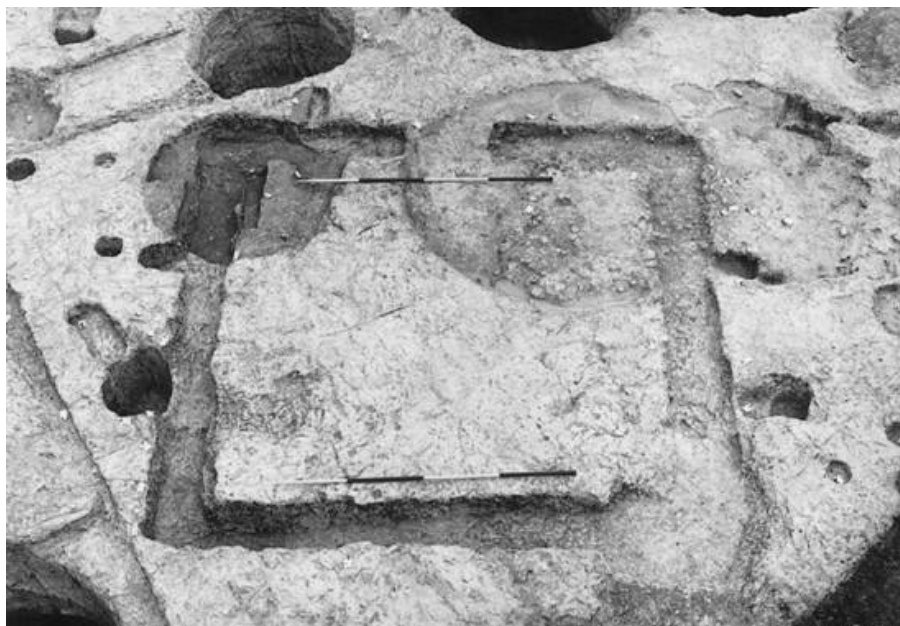


Figure 20.15 *The principal 'shrine', Danebury, Hants (photograph: Danebury Trust).*

Finally we must mention the remarkable site of Fison Way, Thetford, Norfolk, excavated between 1980 and 1982. Here a series of hill-top enclosures, apparently domestic in origin, was replaced early in the first century AD by a double-ditched rectangular enclosure containing one centrally placed massive round building. The overall plan is not unlike Hayling Island though the Fison Way complex was on a much larger scale. This phase II structure was replaced, in phase III, by an even more startling arrangement comprising a large rectangular ditched enclosure containing five carefully sited circular buildings: the central structure is interpreted as being of two storeys. This inner enclosure is set concentrically within another rectangular ditched enclosure with the intervening space, of some 34 m, occupied by eight concentrically arranged trenches which the excavator interprets as bedding trenches for bushes or trees ([Figure 20.18](#)). The date of phase III is not closely defined but could lie within a decade on either side of the Roman invasion. The very remarkable nature of the plan and the virtual absence of contemporary domestic debris argue strongly for the site being a sanctuary.

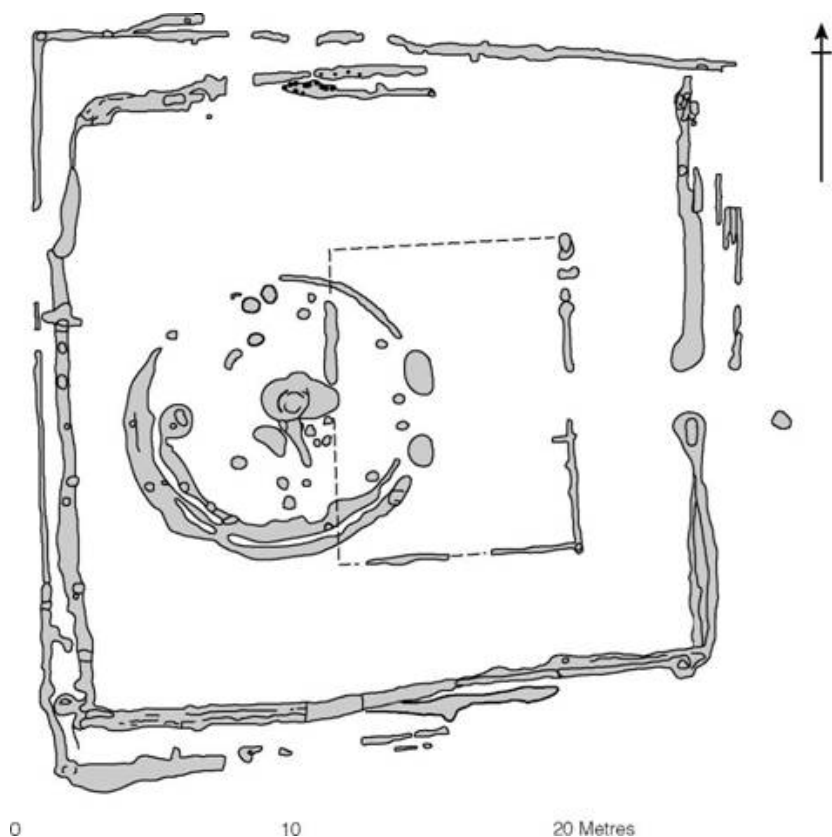


Figure 20.16 *The temple at Hayling Island, Hants (source: King and Soffe 2001).*

Sacred locations and the natural landscape

Sacred locations unmarked by shrines must have abounded in Britain, as in the rest of the Celtic world. Springs, bogs and rivers would have been the obvious foci for ritual practices, as too would other striking natural features such as large rocks, very old trees or groves of trees. In all of these places the gods were thought to live, and there they had to be served or placated.

Direct archaeological evidence for such locations is seldom forthcoming but many of the items of metalwork recovered from bogs and rivers may well have been offerings deliberately dedicated to the spirits of the place (Fitzpatrick 1984; Wait 1985). The enormous numbers of exotic objects from the Thames (Figure 20.19) and the smaller, but no less impressive, collections from other rivers like the Witham and the Tyne probably originated in this way. Bog deposits

are also relatively common in some parts of Britain; among these must be included the large collection of metalwork thrown into the lake at Llyn Cerrig-Bach on Anglesey, and the hoard of material, including two cauldrons, from Llyn Fawr in Glamorganshire. The pair of bronze ritual spoons from Crosby Ravensworth, Westmorland, the pony cap and horns from Torrs in Kirkcudbrightshire and the famous carnyx head from Deskford were also bog deposits. Besides the Llyn Fawr find, several other cauldrons from Britain, including an example from Feltwell in Norfolk, and others from Ireland, had been thrown into bogs. Tankards too were sometimes found in rivers and bogs, like the famous Trawsfynydd tankard from Merionethshire and the vessel from Shapwick Heath, Somerset. The metalwork from these locations is impressive not only in quantity but also for its very high quality. One can only suppose that a surprisingly high percentage of society's wealth was dedicated to the gods in this manner.

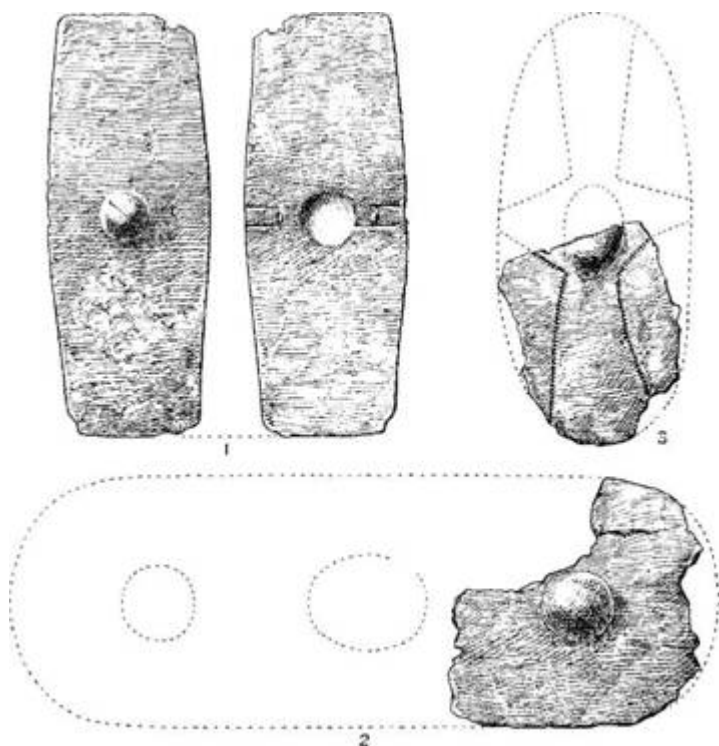


Figure 20.17 Votive model shields from Worth, Kent (scale 1:3) (source: reproduced from Klein 1928).

It is quite likely that specific locations were chosen as the points from which the offerings were thrown into their watery contexts. At Llyn Cerrig Bach a natural rock provides a convenient platform but

elsewhere specifically constructed walkways may have been built out into the water. The Late Bronze Age structure at Flag Fen may belong to this category, with votive offerings of metalwork being deposited from the Late Bronze Age to the Roman Conquest. Another structure discovered in 1981 in the valley of the river Witham at Fiskerton, near Lincoln, consisted of two rows of vertical timbers supporting horizontal boarding. Dendrochronological dates show that the timbers were renewed every sixteen to eighteen years between 457 and 317 BC. From this walkway a number of offerings were thrown into the water, including iron swords and spears together with a number of tools. It is not irrelevant that the famous Witham shield was found nearby in 1781. Structures like Fiskerton may have been quite common in the Iron Age landscape, allowing devotees to cross the liminal space between the land and water sacred to the gods.

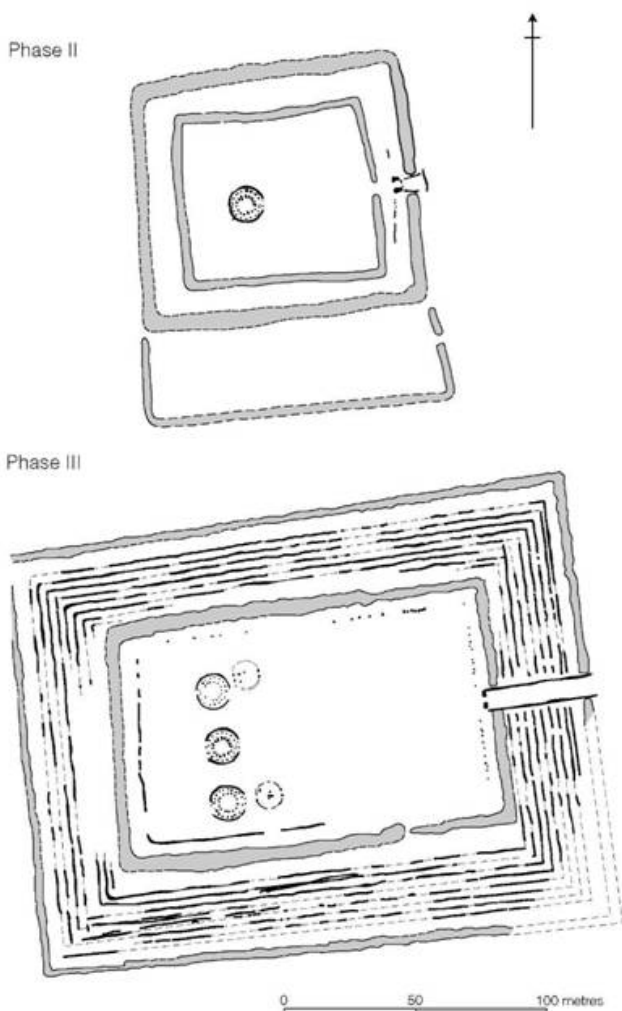


Figure 20.18 The ritual site at Fison Way, Thetford, Norfolk (source: Gregory 1992a).

Finally, within the context of watery deposits we must consider the human body found in the bog at Lindow, Cheshire. The man had been hit violently on the head, been garrotted and had his throat cut before being consigned to the bog. It is tempting to see this as a ritual act and to remember, in this context, the tightly flexed skeletons found on the bottoms of the pits in Danebury and elsewhere in central southern Britain. Lindow man may differ from them only in that local burial conditions preserved his skin and hair, allowing the manner of death to be determined. In other words it is a distinct possibility that the sacrifice of human beings was widespread in pre-Roman Britain.

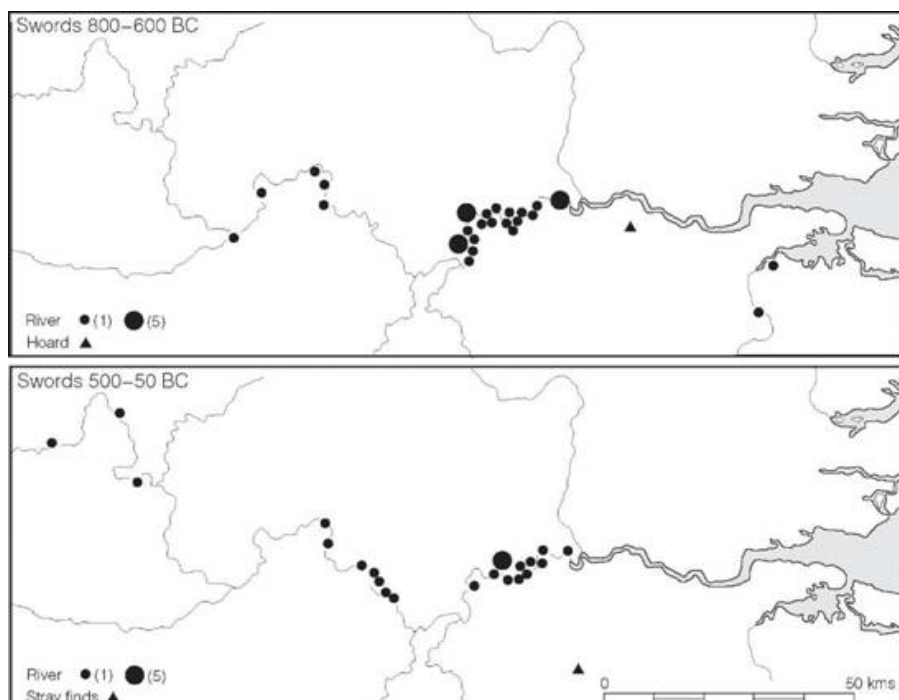


Figure 20.19 The Thames – a sacred river (source: Cunliffe 1993).

While the discovery of fine metalwork tends to pinpoint sacred places besides bogs or rivers, the sacred groves mentioned by the classical writers are more difficult to locate. Some help is, however, provided by the distribution of the Gallo-Britannic word *nemeton*, which means a sanctuary in a woodland clearing. The word occurs in several Romano-British place-names in different parts of Britain, such as *Vernemeton* near Leicester, *Medionemeton* in southern Scotland, and

Nemetostatio near North Tawton in Devon (Griffith 1985). The Roman name for the thermal spring at Buxton, *Aquae Arnemetiae*, also includes the element *nemet-*, suggesting that the spring was in use as a religious centre long before the invasion. That so many *nemeton* elements are incorporated in Roman place-names of Britain is an indication of the large numbers of sacred woodland clearings of pre-Conquest date, the memory of which lingered on.

One possible contender for the title of *nemeton* is Snettisham in Norfolk where a number of discrete ‘hoards’ of gold, silver and electrum torcs, coins and other scrap precious metals have been unearthed over the years since the first discovery was made in 1948. In 1991 a large polygonal enclosure ditch was discovered enclosing 8 ha within which all the ‘hoards’ were located. Although the ditch dates from the Roman period it could well be that it was laid out as the *temenos* boundary of the religious place which may indeed have been a sacred grove. Such issues are difficult to test archaeologically.

The deposition of valuable goods in rivers, bogs, springs or groves would have been undertaken within the context of an intricate pattern of religious beliefs now entirely beyond reconstruction. All we can safely surmise is that the rites would have involved some element of propitiation – the thanking of the deity for support in some enterprise or in anticipation of divine intervention in the future. Similar acts probably pervaded Iron Age life.

Propitiation and belief within the home

In the late 1970s it became clear, from the large-scale excavations at the hillfort of Danebury, that recurring patterns of deposition could be recognized when comparing the contents of disused storage pits, enabling consistent behaviour to be distinguished from casual rubbish disposal. Thus the articulated leg of a horse found on the bottom of one pit is relatively meaningless but when found six or seven times in a sample of 200 pits it becomes a ‘behaviour pattern’. This recognition, and the very large number of storage pits excavated, encouraged a detailed analysis which has thrown much light on ritual behaviour within the settlement (Grant 1984, 533–43; Cunliffe 1992, 1995, 80–8; Poole 1995, 249–75). These observations and their implications have been widely accepted and have been examined across a broader range of sites (Hill 1995a; Cunliffe 2000, 128–34).

The evidence from Danebury and from contemporary sites excavated in Hampshire has amply demonstrated that, within the fillings of storage pits, complex systems of deposition were in operation involving animal carcasses, whole or in joints ([Figure 20.20](#)), human bodies or body parts, groups of pots and sets of

artefacts. These are the archaeologically recognizable component of a behaviour pattern which may well have required a range of products, including perhaps cheese, hides, bales of wool, etc., to be placed, usually on the bottoms of storage pits, after they had ceased to be used for their primary purposes. In a significant number of cases secondary and sometimes tertiary deposits were made in the same pit, after intervals of erosion, before the pit was finally abandoned.

Explanations of such behaviour are necessarily speculative but if, as seems highly likely, storage pits were used to keep seed grain during the period between harvest and sowing, then it would not be unreasonable to see the special deposits as propitiatory offerings to the chthonic deities, who were perceived to have guarded the grain during the liminal period of its dormancy, and to ensure subsequent fertility. In some such context the secondary and tertiary deposits could also be explained as reflecting rituals associated with a successful harvest and the beginning of a new cycle of storage. This might also offer an explanation for the use of storage pits which might seem to be an unnecessary way to store seed when perfectly serviceable above- ground granaries were also in use. By digging a pit into the realms of the underworld and placing seed corn in it the community might have been deliberately placing its vital seed in the safe-keeping of the chthonic gods. There are many resonances here with Indo-European fertility beliefs perhaps best known through the myths of Demeter and Persephone (Cunliffe 1992). How widespread such beliefs and practices were in the British Isles it is difficult to say but the underground storage structures of Cornwall (the fogous) and of Scotland (the souterrains) may reflect aspects of the same beliefs.



Figure 20.20 *Propitiatory offering of a dog and a horse leg in a pit at Danebury, Hants (photograph: Danebury Trust).*

The concept of fertility must have been central to the concerns of Iron Age communities and it is highly probable that the beneficial effects of fertilizing the fields, by direct animal manuring and the spreading of midden waste and marl, would have been understood and widely practised. Such regimes would, no doubt, have been enacted within strict religious control. Thus the huge midden deposits at Potterne, East Chisenbury and elsewhere may have been, in part, ritual accumulations reflecting the power of fertility. Similarly the extensive evidence which has come to light for the quarrying of chalk, often by opening out existing ditches, reflects the use made of chalk for marling the clayey soils capping the chalk downs. The burial of human remains within these chalk quarries may be another deliberate act in the fertility cycle (Cunliffe 2000, 130–2).

Other aspects of propitiation may also be recognized from time to time on settlement sites. The deposition of hoards of ironwork

presents an easily identifiable practice. Hingley (1991) has pointed out that iron currency bars are often associated with settlement boundaries while at Danebury the four hoards of ironwork recovered were all found under the floors of houses, suggesting a very deliberate pattern of deposition, the iron 'offering' perhaps ensuring the well-being of the occupants (Cunliffe 1995, 86). Beliefs, and the ritual acts which sustained them, must have pervaded every aspect of daily life. We will return to other aspects of this theme later (pp. 576–8).

Druids and the gods

The intermediaries acting between the people and the gods in Britain, as in Gaul, were the Druids. Caesar believed that Druidic religion originated in Britain, whence it was introduced to the Continent: 'Even today', he says, 'anyone who wants to make a study of it goes to Britain to do so' (BG VI, 14).

The Druids served Gaulish society in various ways: they were responsible for administering and guiding the religious life of the people, supervising ceremonies and sacrifices, and divining the future from such omens as the death struggles of a sacrificial victim. They also maintained the theory and practice of the law and were the teachers of the old oral traditions of the people, holding schools where the novices learnt verses off by heart. Caesar reports:

They seem to have established this custom for two reasons: because they do not want their knowledge to become widespread and because they do not want their pupils to rely on the written word instead of their memories; for once this happens, they tend to reduce the effort they put into their learning.

(BG, VI, 15)

The literary evidence relating to the Druids can frequently be used to enhance and explain the archaeological material. Belief in the afterlife, which is demonstrated by the provision of grave-goods with the dead, is referred to several times. Caesar says that the one idea that the Druids wanted to emphasize above all others was that souls do not die but pass from one body to another as each body dies. Pomponius Mela, writing in the first century AD, elaborates on this belief: because of their very strongly held views on the afterlife, he says:

they burn and bury with their dead the things they had owned while they were alive. In the past they even used to put off the completion of business

and the payment of debts until they had arrived in the next world. Some even went so far as to throw themselves willingly on to their friends' funeral pyres in order to share the new life with them.

(Place of the World, iii, 19)

A firm conviction about immortality was of particular encouragement to those required to act bravely in battle, as several classical writers were quick to point out.

Pomponius Mela writes of Druids teaching in caves or inaccessible woods, while Tacitus mentions 'groves devoted to Mona's [Anglesey's] barbarous superstitions', implying that at these places human sacrifice was carried out. An altogether more gentle ritual is, however, described in some detail by Pliny the Elder. The passage is worth quoting at length because of the insight it gives into ritual beliefs and practices which would otherwise be unrepresented in the archaeological record.

They choose groves of oak for the sake of the tree alone and they never perform any sacred rite unless they have a branch of it. They think that everything that grows on it has been sent from heaven by the god himself. Mistletoe, however, is very rarely found on the oak and, when it is, it is gathered with a great deal of ceremony, if possible on the sixth day of the moon... They choose this day because, although the moon has not yet reached half-size, it already has considerable influence. They call the mistletoe by the name that means all-healing.

(Nat. Hist., XVI, 249)

He goes on to describe the cutting of the mistletoe with a golden sickle by a white-robed Druid, followed by the ritual sacrifice of two white bulls, and concludes: 'They believe that if the mistletoe is taken in a drink, it makes barren animals fertile, and is a remedy against all poison'. Later Pliny mentions other herbs which, if collected under certain conditions, possessed curative properties: selago (or sabiné) warded off evil and could cure eye diseases, while a marsh plant, samolus, was regarded as a charm against cattle disease. Mistletoe, selago and samolus are just three which Pliny happens to note but hundreds of other herbs must have been endowed with medicinal properties about which the Druids would have known and taught.

Many of the classical accounts refer to the Druids carrying out human sacrifice, and that ritual killing may well have an archaeological reality has been suggested above (pp. 568–9). Ritual killing for the purpose of augury is mentioned by Diodorus Siculus and Strabo, while the mass sacrifices of men and beasts, burnt to

death in cages made of branches, are described in some detail by Caesar and Strabo. Strabo also records ritual deaths by archery and crucifixion, and Tacitus, describing the destruction of the Druid centre on Anglesey in AD 59, justifies the Roman attack by saying of the Druids that 'it was their religion to drench their altars in blood of prisoners and consult their gods by means of human entrails' – words calculated to conjure up a sense of horrified distaste among his sophisticated Roman audience. One wonders whether the partly dismembered child from Wandlebury, the human limbs and torso from the 'ritual pit' at Danebury or the man buried in the bog at Lindow were in any way connected with Druidic practices. The only other archaeological evidence for ritual is the decapitation of bodies, like those found at Bredon Hill, Worcs., and the setting up of heads on gates as witnessed by the skull found near the entrance to the Stanwick fort in Yorkshire. Decapitation is, however, more likely to have been a normal part of the battle scene than the preserve of the priestly cult.

The Druids mediated between men and their gods, of whom there were many. Caesar gives the clearest picture of the Celtic pantheon by equating the native deities with their nearest Roman counterpart (*BG* VI, 17–18): 'Their main god', he says, 'is Mercury; they have many images of him. They consider him the inventor of all arts, the god of travellers and of journeys and the greatest god when it comes to obtaining money and goods.' He then goes on to describe the lesser gods: Apollo who wards off disease, Minerva presiding over work and art, Jupiter the ruler of the heavens, and Mars the god of war. 'When they have decided to go to battle, they generally promise the captured goods to Mars. When they are victorious, they sacrifice the captured animals and make a pile of everything else.' As we have suggested above, perhaps some of the ritual deposits from rivers and bogs were votive dedications made to the gods in thanks for victory.



Figure 20.21 *Boat with figures from Roos Carr, Holderness (photograph: Hull Museum).*

Iconography

There are few indisputable representations of gods or men from pre-Roman Iron Age contexts in Britain, but wooden figurines from Roos Carr, Holderness ([Figure 20.21](#)), Kingsteignton, Devon, and Ballachulish, Argyllshire, are all of first-millennium BC date and provide a valuable reminder of a facet of religious behaviour which was, in all probability, widespread in Britain, and may perhaps be compared with the votive offerings found in considerable numbers at sacred locations in Gaul, usually associated with water. Radiocarbon dates suggest that Ballachulish may be the oldest, dating from the seventh to fifth centuries; Roos Carr is a little younger, dating to the sixth century, with Kingsteignton belonging to the fourth to third centuries (Coles 1990).

Stone carvings are equally rare in Britain, but the work at Garton Slack, and elsewhere in Yorkshire, has produced a group of remarkable chalk figurines (Stead 1971b, 1988; Brewster 1976). The figures ([Figure 20.22](#)), averaging about 13 cm high, were usually wedge-shaped, with simply moulded heads which in most cases had been broken off. No attempt had been made to show legs, but arms were indicated by incisions and shallow carving, and several of the

figures were shown to be wearing belts and swords. In addition to the human figures a model of an oval-shaped shield was recovered. While most of the objects were without a clearly defined context, one was found under archaeological conditions stratified in the ditch of a rectangular 'ritual enclosure' which formed part of a religious and burial complex. There can, therefore, be little doubt that the figurines should be regarded as some kind of votive offering.

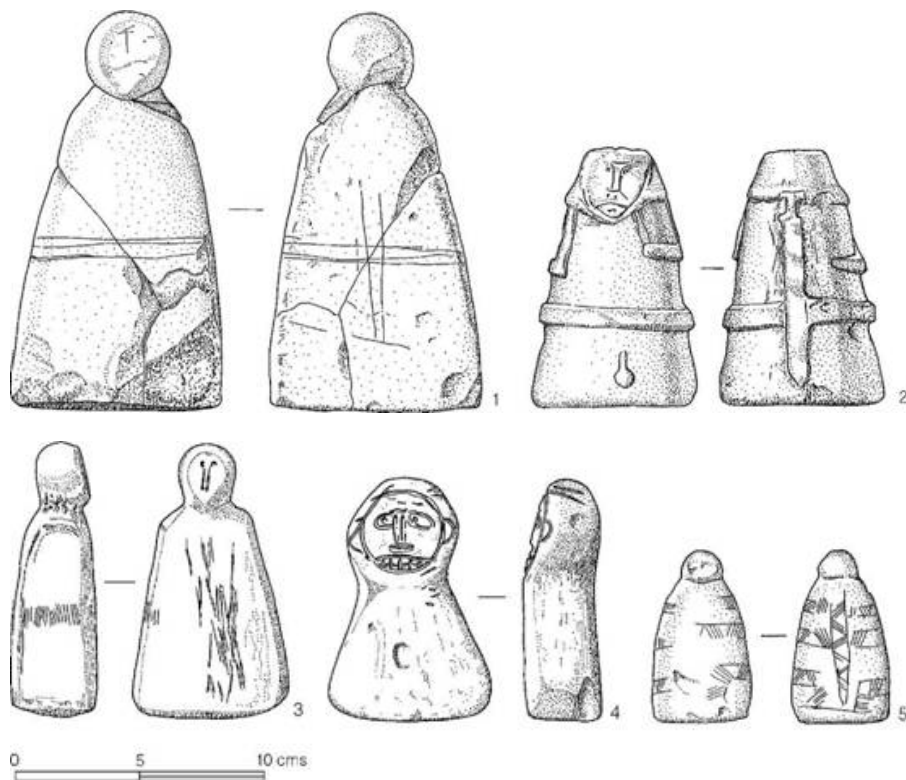


Figure 20.22 Stone figurines from North Humberside: 1 Wetwang Slack; 2 Withernsea; 3 Garton Slack; 4 uncertain; 5 Malton (North Yorks.) (source: Stead 1988).

The rarity of monumental stone carving in Britain, in the style of the stelae of Brittany and the pillars of the Rhineland, deserves noting since it implies a significant difference in attitude to religious symbolism. There are, however, two fragmentary stone pillars from Trefollwyn, Anglesey, which might reasonably be claimed to be of Iron Age origin.

The iconography of Britain before the Conquest, reflected largely in the Roman formalization of the situation, shows that an immense

number of local or tribal gods existed, each known by a regional name and each endowed with specific qualities. Caesar's broad summing up, linking the Celtic deities to their nearest Roman counterpart, was little more than rationalization of an exceptionally complex and bewildering pattern. After the Roman Conquest the gods were frequently depicted in various guises, sometimes as a disembodied head, which must have represented a generalized portrait of divinity, and sometimes with specific characteristics. One of the more common types is the horned god which, depending upon his attributes, might variously represent the war-god Cernunnos (as Mars), Mercury, who Caesar says was the most commonly illustrated, or sometimes the hunting god Silvanus. Among the female deities the old triad of mother goddesses frequently occurs, particularly in the north and west, reflecting a deep-seated traditional belief in the power of three, a belief further emphasized by the occasional discovery of triple-faced heads.

Besides sculptural representations, the old gods are often named on dedicatory altars and other inscriptions. The names might include tribal deities like Brigantia or more widely respected gods like Camulos, the powerful war-god, whose shrine probably lay in the defended area at Camulodunum – perhaps at the site of Gosbecks Farm, an important cult centre in the Roman period. Other gods were more specific to certain localities, like Sulis who, later paired with Minerva, presided over the sacred spring at Bath, whereas others possessed more prescribed skills: Taranis the thunder-god or Nodens the cloud-maker. Some deities were rather more generalized in their stated powers: Nemetona and Mars Rigonemeta were respectively the goddess and god of the sacred grove, while Leucetius was simply 'the shining one'.

The list of gods is very long: each tribe must have had its own pantheon of favourite deities and every one of the many thousands of sacred locations would have been the special preserve of a local god whose name and presence would have been part of the natural awareness of the local community. It would have been difficult to travel far in Iron Age Britain without coming into contact with some sign of the gods, for religion and superstition pervaded all aspects of pre-Roman life.

Space, place and time

Boundaries, particularly those which define habitation or assembly sites, are most likely to have been endowed with power, and their creation and maintenance will have been embedded in ritual (Hingley 1990). Since an enclosure boundary separates outside from inside, and

in doing so bounds the behaviour appropriate to the two zones, the liminal spaces between them – the entrances – will have been particularly potent and subject to many taboos. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that entrances often showed evidence of elaboration and of many phases of renewal. While such works may have resulted from practical necessity – the requirement to repair and redefend – it is highly probable that acts of renewal carried with them a deeper symbolic meaning. A settlement like Gussage All Saints in Dorset, with its substantial gate and spacious front forecourt, was constructed to focus on the act of assembly and procession into the enclosure. The enclosure ditch itself, especially away from the gate, was little more than symbolic.

The act of procession may also have been the reason why many of the early hillforts (like the late Neolithic henge monuments before them) had two ‘entrances’ opposed to each other. They allowed passage through the enclosure and may well have served as entrance and exit each with its own distinct function. The blocking of one of the entrances, which seems to have been a widespread phenomenon in central southern Britain at the end of the fourth century, must have represented a major reorientation in behaviour and may have been only one aspect of a widespread social dislocation experienced at this time.

The excavation of Danebury, Hants, raises a number of questions about the significance of hillfort boundaries which have traditionally been considered principally in terms of military imperatives. Sections through the so-called counterscarp bank on the outer lip of the ditch showed that it had been gradually built up over a considerable period of time by a number of thin deposits derived from clearing out the ditch. At one point eleven distinct layers could be identified with evidence of weathering between. What we are observing here is the regular clearing of the ditch perhaps every five to ten years. The periodicity of the work would seem to imply an act of renewal determined more by ritual than by sudden need. The main rampart was subject to two phases of ‘rebuilding’, the second of which was contemporary with the blocking of the gate. In neither case did the addition of material to the back of the rampart improve the defensive capability of the rampart. At best they added a clean layer of gleaming white chalk to the inner rampart face. Here again it is more than likely that this represents an act of renewal, related to some major event in the life of the community. After the second renewal in the early third century buildings occupied the area immediately behind the rampart. Here it was possible to identify eight phases of extensive rebuilding. If each phase was of approximately equal duration this would imply rebuilding every twenty years or so – a periodicity which

may be linked to changing generations or to lunar cycles. While it must be admitted that all of these observations could be explained in purely practical terms it is quite possible that the three sequences of renewal were controlled by behavioural cycles embedded in the belief systems of the society. There are ample examples in the recent ethnographic past to show that processes of this kind were widespread in the world. Life in the Iron Age would undoubtedly have been circumscribed by behavioural rhythms of this kind.

It is a reasonable assumption that Iron Age communities understood the passage of time and used celestial phenomena to create a calendar based on the solstices and the equinox (Fitzpatrick 1996, 1997b; Parker Pearson 1999). These fixed points in the year, marked by ceremonies and by feasting, would have divided the tasks of the agro-pastoral cycle signalling the onset of new activity and a change of pace (Figure 16.5). It is even possible that the propitiatory offerings we have noted in the storage pits were deposited on such occasions. Annual cycles, suitably recorded, may in aggregate have created longer cycles controlling acts of renewal of the kind seen at Danebury. These are speculative matters difficult to test but the speculation is quite within the realms of possibility.

One interesting observation, which has some bearing on these issues, is the recognition that a high percentage of Iron Age roundhouses are oriented with their doorways to the south-east with a particular emphasis on the direction of the midwinter sunrise (SE) and the equinox (E) (Oswald 1997). While there are some practical advantages in this, in terms of shelter from prevailing winds and gaining early light and warmth from winter sunrise, it may well be that the direction was deliberately chosen to orient the house with a propitious celestial alignment. The argument has further been developed by suggestions that the alignment, passing through the doorway, was perceived to divide the house into two parts, each reserved for specific activities (Fitzpatrick 1997a; Parker Pearson 1999). It is highly probable that the interior spaces of houses were understood to be carefully structured so as to contain behaviour, but little compelling evidence of this has yet been found for the Iron Age.

The question of structured space is an interesting one and we may assume that all enclosed places were governed by rules and taboos which demanded that different activities were performed in designated, but not necessarily physically demarcated, zones. These were no doubt defined in terms of the sun (sunrise and sunset), by axis of entry (left- or right-hand), or by other, less obvious, relational attributes. Occasionally there are hints of these patterns in the deposit of midden material (Parker Pearson, Sharples and Mulville 1996) or by the relationships of different kinds of buildings (Cunliffe 1995, 20–

6) but patterns of behaviour that undoubtedly governed people's lives are still archaeologically elusive.

Part IV

Systems

Iron Age society and social change

The dynamics of change: some generalizations

All societies exist in a state of dynamic equilibrium with their environments: this relationship constitutes a system. Systems are infinitely complex and can be approached at any level. Thus, at a very simple level, a climatic change affecting the environment could lead a community to change its agricultural regime over a period of years, but that change would probably lead to some readjustment in social organization and this might, in turn, create new demands which could only be met by making further changes to the agricultural practices. In this example a *prime mover*, climatic change, initiates a modification in the man:landscape system which sets up further reverberations around the system. In other words each change *feeds back* into the system, causing further change.

These feedback mechanisms are an essential feature of all systems and it is through them that directional change is initiated. Once underway a feedback cycle may gain momentum, and change within a system may be forced along a particular trajectory. Sometimes rate of change escalates to such a point that the old systems collapse and a new set of systems emerges.

This somewhat bland and oversimple summary belies the real complexity of the situation but is sufficient to give some sense of the dynamic nature of society. Yet not all societies are in a state of rapid change: some seem to have established a state of near-stable equilibrium and little change is evident. Such groups have been referred to as *conserving societies*. Others, in which rapid change can be seen, have been called *innovating societies*. While these terms are helpful generalizations they tend to overlook another characteristic of society – its innate desire to remain unchanged. Change is seen as a threat, a move from what is known and safe to what is unknown and potentially dangerous. Thus there is usually an imperative, inherent in every society, to resist change: this has been called *dynamic conservatism*. The forces of dynamic conservatism serve as a brake to hold the trajectory of change, caused by feedback within the system,

in check. The two forces are in constant tension.

Tensions between opposing forces are evident throughout social systems. At the level of the individual, there is the conflict between the aggressive desire to achieve and the need for gregariousness. This conflict is resolved by systems of social behaviour which provide a framework within which the individual can operate, safeguarding on the one hand the structure of the community, and thus its power to reproduce itself, while providing the individual with carefully circumscribed opportunities to engage in competitive display.

Another tension inherent in humanity is that between an individual's perception of the known, tangible, world and the world which he senses lies outside it – the unknown – above and below our world, inhabited by spirits and the gods. To control and constrain the uncertainties belief systems with their attendant rituals are developed and by these means the natural and supernatural are kept in equilibrium.

These brief generalizations give some idea of the complexities inherent in the study of societies. All social systems are bound together by mechanisms which have developed to control inner tensions and the resulting systems exist in a dynamic relationship with the environment. Left to themselves and given the constraint of dynamic conservatism, there would tend to be comparatively little change over time, but a number of motive forces, often originating from outside the system, may interpose themselves to upset the equilibrium or alter the trajectory. Of these the most significant are climatic change, external intervention, disease and population growth.

The question of climatic change has been addressed in earlier chapters (pp. 27–9, 33–4). In summary, climatic deterioration throughout the first half of the first millennium BC encouraged the growth of blanket bog over many tracts of uplands in western parts of the British Isles, which had previously been incorporated in farming systems, creating a dislocation of settlement. Added to this, a fall in mean temperature caused many upland areas in the north to be abandoned as arable because the conditions were such that crops would no longer ripen. There can be little doubt that in these areas climatic deterioration had a significant effect on the resident communities. The land would no longer provide for them and in consequence there would have been readjustment ranging from a restructuring of cropping and pastoral regimes, where this was possible, to abandonment and migration where it was not. The upland areas of the north and west of Britain suffered most from the climatic changes of the first millennium but it is doubtful whether the effects over the rest of the country were significant enough to cause much readjustment.

External intervention as a prime causative factor for change was at one time a popular belief among scholars studying the Iron Age ([chapter 1](#)). Invasions of people from the Continent, bringing with them alien material cultures and social systems, were called up as an explanation whenever cultural change was identified. Simple models of this kind have fallen from favour except possibly in the case of the Arras culture of Yorkshire where the archaeological evidence for external influence seems quite strong, and the Belgae of southern Britain about whose coming Caesar was explicit. But if 'invasions' in the traditional sense are no longer accepted as a major cause of change it is abundantly clear that much of south and east Britain was in contact with the Continent throughout the Iron Age and that sometimes contact was intense. In the Early and Middle Iron Age the systems of interaction are difficult to identify but the movement of commodities, as trade goods or in cycles of gift exchange, probably bulked large. Movements of people, however, except as commodities or brides, are unlikely to have been on a significant scale.

By the beginning of the first century BC, when the economic systems of the Roman world started to make themselves felt in Gaul and beyond, the tribes of south-east Britain began to experience entirely new and unfamiliar pressures. A wide range of luxury goods became available and could be acquired by the wealthy to enhance their prestige, while an external demand now existed for British goods which had previously not been produced in surplus. The Roman desire for slaves alone would have caused a widespread disruption to existing social systems. While slavery probably existed in British society the consumption of slaves is unlikely to have been great. But once Roman entrepreneurs had begun to involve themselves in the exchange networks extending to Britain, their demands would have been such that slaves rapidly took on the aspect of a cash crop. One has only to look at the impact of the American slave trade on the tribes of west Africa to appreciate the socially disruptive potential which was unleashed.

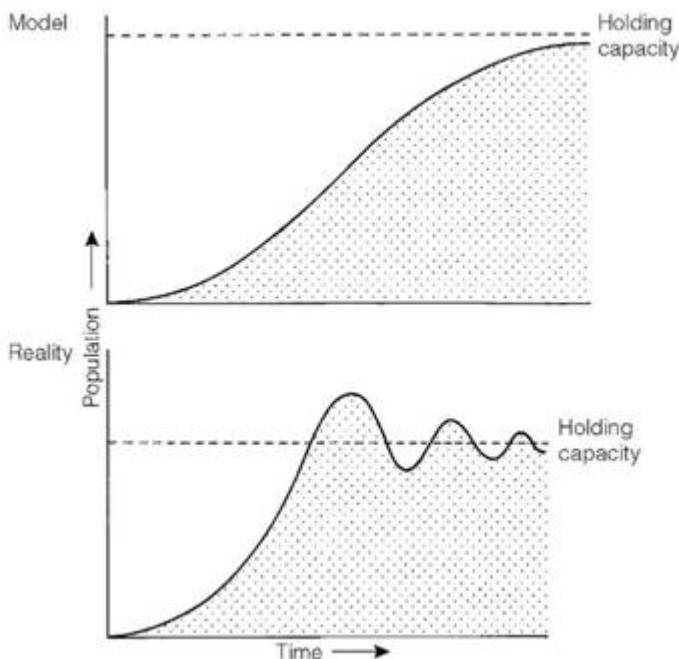


Figure 21.1 Diagram to illustrate holding capacity (source: author).

Disease can have a devastating effect on population. The Black Death of the fourteenth century AD totally altered the face of Europe but there is no evidence at all that epidemics raged in Iron Age Britain. Indeed, given the dispersed nature of the population and the lack of extensive communication networks, it is unlikely that plagues played a significant part in British prehistory. Local epidemics no doubt occurred and many communities may well have been decimated, but this can hardly have been on a scale large enough to have disrupted social systems.

Finally, we come to the question of population pressure. An understanding of the dynamics of population is crucial to any archaeological study, but that so little attention has been paid to the problem is largely due to the lack of tangible evidence which can be quantified (Cunliffe 1978b). This should not, however, be taken to mean that demographic change is unimportant – quite the contrary, it is probably the most important single factor bearing on social dynamics.

The theory of demographic change has been extensively studied. At a simple level we may say that a closed population would normally increase until such time that the *holding capacity* of its environment imposed a constraint, at which point it would level out below that

holding capacity ([Figure 21.1](#)). Holding capacity is an arbitrary level created by the interactions of environment, climate, technological ability and social values. Any one of these factors may change or be changed, leading to a raising or lowering of the productive threshold. For example, climatic deterioration could significantly reduce holding capacity, and so too could soil degeneration resulting from overcropping. Alternatively pressure of population, nearing the holding capacity, could cause stress conditions leading to innovations improving agricultural practices, or to the modification of social taboos to allow a more effective redistribution and utilization of resources. The theme of population pressure is one which will recur throughout the rest of this chapter.

From the above brief overview it will be evident that the dynamics of change present a complex pattern of tightly interwoven factors. Social systems were delicately balanced: most aimed for a state of equilibrium but that equilibrium was never stable. Change could be imperceptibly slow or catastrophic. While we may find it difficult to discern much of these dynamics in the archaeological record we can at least be sure that in the Iron Age world they were an ever-present reality.

Space and territory

Many of the discussions in previous chapters have made explicit the spatial patterning which occurs within the archaeological data. It is not proposed to recapitulate the evidence presented there but simply to offer a few basic generalizations which will be relevant to the rest of this chapter. Standing back from the detail it becomes evident that Britain may be broadly divided into five basic zones ([Figure 21.2](#)):

- a *South-Western Zone* stretching from Cornwall to north Wales
- a *North-Western Zone* including the west coasts of Scotland and the Western and Northern Isles
- an *Eastern Zone* extending from Kent to Yorkshire
- a *North-Eastern Zone* from Yorkshire to the Highland fringes
- a *Central Southern Zone* occupying the area from the southern Channel coast, through the Welsh borderland to north Wales.

While there is of course a considerable blurring of the boundaries, this broad fivefold division seems to hold good for much of the Iron Age, each zone developing its own range of distinctive socio-economic systems. The reason for the zoning is largely geographical, landscape potential, microclimate and communication imposing constraints within which a limited range of strategies emerge as the most appropriate. Another factor of some significance is ease of contact

with the Continent. The South-Western, Central Southern and Eastern Zones all have coast lines facing Europe and inevitably contact existed across the intervening seas. Indeed it could be argued that contact between these zones and their Continental interfaces was easier than between one British zone and the next.

Within each of the broadly defined zones many regional variations can be distinguished. In some cases, especially in the Central Southern Zone, it is possible to show that these variations were maintained over a considerable period of time and may reasonably be identified with some of the tribal groupings recorded at the end of the Iron Age.

The five zones defined here provide a convenient framework within which to discuss the developing societies of Iron Age Britain so long as the boundaries are not regarded as too rigid either geographically or culturally.

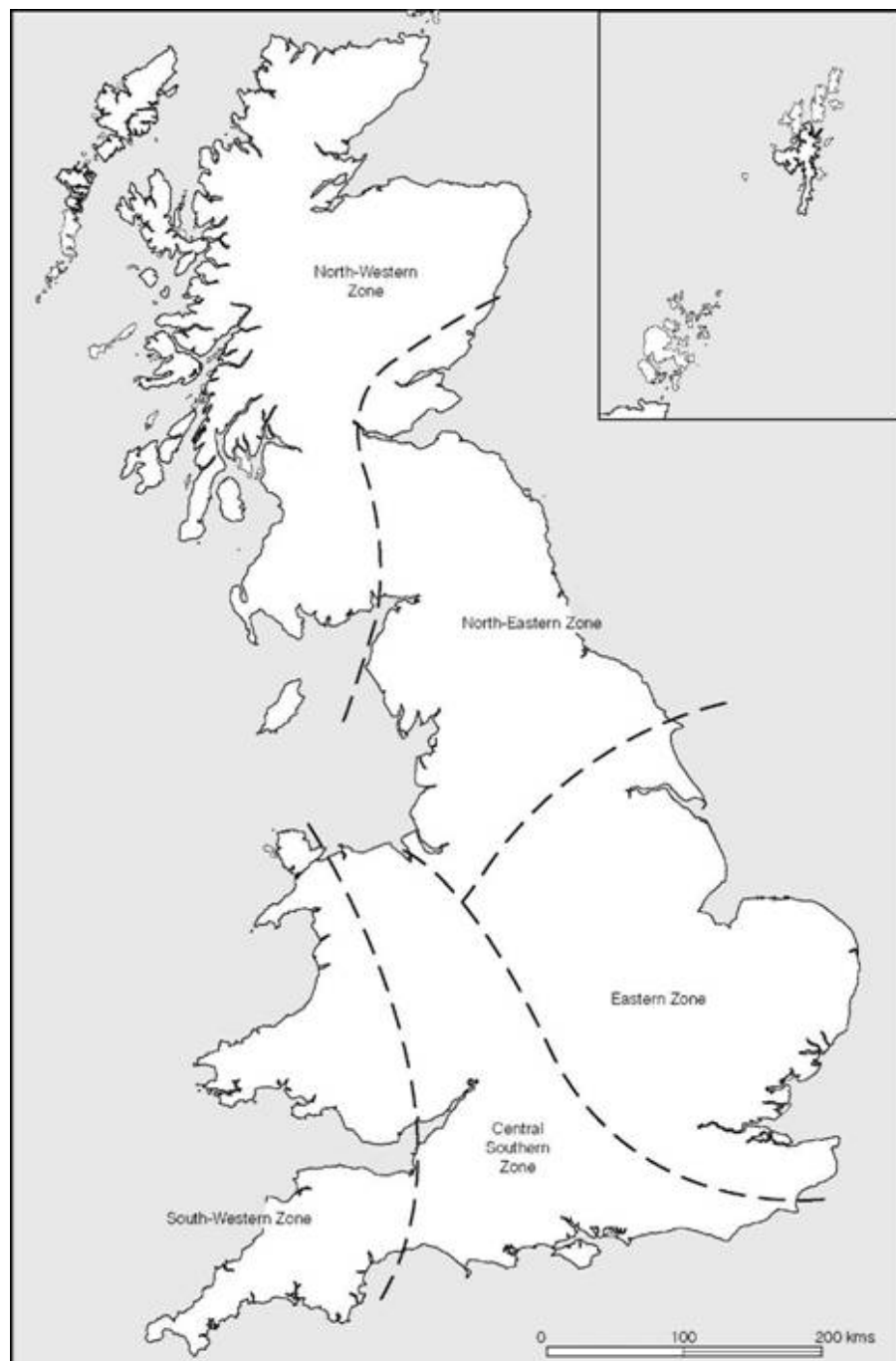


Figure 21.2 *The indicative zones of Iron Age Britain (source: author).*

The Earliest, Early and Middle Iron Age: c. 800–100 BC

The Eastern Zone

The Eastern Zone of Britain may loosely be characterized as that territory drained by the rivers flowing into the Humber, Wash and Thames. It looks east to the North Sea and across the sea to the coasts of Belgium and Holland.

At the beginning of the ninth century the Eastern Zone was experiencing an intensification in those belief systems which led to the deposition of bronze. Bronze was taken out of circulation and either buried in hoards or thrown into rivers. The distribution of finds of the Carp's-Tongue Sword Complex, which are typical of the later part of the Ewart Park phase and date roughly to the ninth century (pp. 75–7), shows a massive concentration in the Thames valley and in East Anglia (Burgess 1969a, figure 14). What social pressures lay behind this spate of deposition is more difficult to discern. The deposition of weapons, particularly swords, in rivers had been a feature of the region since the beginning of the Late Bronze Age and was to continue, though in a somewhat abated form, throughout the rest of the Iron Age. Clearly, the act of consigning weapons to rivers had a deep-rooted religious meaning and is one of the characteristics which serve to distinguish the culture of the Eastern Zone from that of other parts of Britain. It is a question to which we shall return.

The burying of large quantities of bronze in the ground is, in all probability, a reflection of a different behaviour pattern. 'Hoarding' in this manner had been going on throughout much of the Bronze Age but the quantity of material consigned to the earth had greatly increased. One plausible explanation, favoured by several scholars, is that the practice arose from the necessity of removing surplus bronze from circulation so that the metal would retain a high value in society. Its supply and distribution could then be controlled by paramount chiefs and in doing so they would maintain their status. This kind of socio-economic system, sometimes called a prestige goods economy, was widespread in the ancient world. The intensification of hoarding in the later part of the Ewart Park phase (c. 850–750 BC) marked the end of the process in the Thames valley and adjacent regions, but in East Anglia the deposition of hoards continued into the subsequent Llyn Fawr phase (c. 750–600 BC). This suggests that the prestige goods economy may have collapsed in the Thames valley during the eighth century but still lingered in East Anglia for possibly as much as a century, before there, too, the old systems finally came to an end.

What caused the collapse of this long-established traditional system

it is difficult to say. It has been suggested that the appearance of iron so destabilized the system, in introducing a new and widely available metal, that a power structure based on the control of the supply of bronze could no longer maintain itself. Roger Thomas (1989) has rejected this view, arguing instead that the reason may be that the control of land now began to take over as the principal means by which the élites maintained their power. With the collapse of bronze as a prestige material the way was now open for iron to emerge from obscurity. This still leaves open the question of why land began to take on a new importance, but population pressure (if it could be demonstrated archaeologically) would provide a suitable moving force.

The settlement pattern of the Eastern Zone in the Earliest and Early Iron Age is not yet well known, but it is now clear that the entire region from Yorkshire to Kent shared in common the *ring forts*. These circular ditched enclosures, protected by ramparts and enclosing a single homestead usually consisting only of a large circular house, occur sporadically throughout the area. There is every reason to regard them as high-status sites: the massiveness of the defences, the size of the central houses and evidence of bronze-working is sufficient to distinguish them from lesser settlements (pp. 39–43). Within the broad category of ring forts may be included the somewhat larger enclosure at Grimthorpe in Yorkshire, measuring some 200 m across, and possibly also the much smaller structures on Micklemoor Hill, West Harling, Norfolk, only 30 and 36 m in diameter. The considerable variation in the size of these sites may imply a difference in the social status of the communities which they housed.

The chronology of the ring forts is still imprecise but a combination of evidence, including radiocarbon assessments and ceramic dating, suggests that they were all probably in use throughout at least the early part of the Earliest Iron Age. Some may have begun earlier. What is clear is that none continued in use into the Early Iron Age. They are therefore a phenomenon of the transitional phase and should be interpreted in the light of the social changes occurring at that time. At the very least they must represent the emergence of an élite able to use its coercive power to create 'monumental structures'. The massiveness of the enclosing earthworks is more likely to be for display than simply for defence. Thus it is possible that in the ring forts we are witnessing the rise of a landholding élite rooted in their own territories at the time when the bronze-based prestige goods economy was breaking down. A greater chronological precision is needed before detailed models can be constructed directly relating the two.

Contact with the Continent was maintained throughout this period,

as is shown by the quantity of Hallstatt C metalwork arriving in the Eastern Zone and being copied locally during the eighth and seventh centuries. That most of the swords known come from rivers is a clear indication that traditional belief systems continued unimpeded.

The ceramic evidence for the Earliest Iron Age is not plentiful. The earliest pottery (LBA transitional) shows a distinct technological improvement over earlier types, with a sharpening of forms leading to a greater angularity which develops, probably in the seventh century, into a more distinctive range of angular forms apparently copying metal prototypes (Kimmeridge–Caburn, Highstead 2, West Harling–Fengate and Staple Howe types). What stands out is a considerable similarity of form in all parts of the zone. There was no attempt at this stage to use pottery as a means of displaying ethnic identity.

The situation in the Early and Middle Iron Age (c. 550–100) is more difficult to determine. Settlement evidence suggests a variety of settlement form ranging from small enclosed homesteads like Brigstock and Draughton, not unlike the earlier ring forts, to large straggly agglomerations like Fengate and Little Waltham which are best considered to be villages. Strongly defended hill-top enclosures, while they occur, for example in Essex and the Chilterns, are by no means common. Where excavation has taken place, occupation can usually be shown to be restricted to the early period. The best that can be said from the disparate and rather scrappy evidence available is that settlement systems probably differed from region to region but there is little to suggest the centralization of power or any well-developed sense of territoriality except along the Chiltern ridge.

The ceramic evidence gives some insight into regionalization. Although, throughout the area and over much of the time, a basic coarse ware tradition of scored jars was in evidence, regional groupings of decorated ceramics appear from the Early Iron Age. East Anglia, the Chilterns, Kent and the Upper Thames valley all have their own very distinctive types, but these seem to be comparatively short lived, and throughout much of the Middle Iron Age in many areas ceramics revert to plain and largely undifferentiated styles. By the end of the Middle Iron Age and the beginning of the Late Iron Age elaborately decorated pottery is once more the norm, particularly around what may be regarded as the fringes of the Eastern Zone from Lincolnshire, through Northamptonshire to the Upper Thames region and then to the Lower Thames.

While there are considerable dangers inherent in overinterpreting evidence of this kind it could be argued that the late decorated styles were developed to distinguish the ethnicity of those communities who occupied what might be regarded as frontier positions around the fringes of the Eastern Zone, in those areas where confrontation with

differently ordered social groups might have occurred. The suggestion is at least plausible. If it is accepted then the brief appearance of distinct styles in the Early Iron Age might suggest another period of tension.

The situation in Yorkshire, on the northern fringes of the Eastern Zone, was altogether different. Some time in the late fifth century a highly distinctive burial rite was adopted involving inhumation in cemeteries, the individual burials usually being enclosed within a rectangular ditched enclosure. The richer burials were accompanied by grave-goods reflecting both gender and status. In a few cases two-wheeled vehicles accompanied the body to the grave. The burial rite, which characterizes this Arras culture, is largely unknown elsewhere in the British Isles but has striking similarities to traditions well established in northern Gaul and beyond. The explanation most frequently adopted is that the Arras culture resulted from an incursion of population from the Continent. An alternative view, put forward by Higham (1987), argues that we may be seeing little more than a powerful local élite, emulated to a lesser extent by their followers, adopting the burial ritual of outsiders to heighten their own status. But this would require that the Arras nobility were in contact with communities on the opposite side of the North Sea, and this implies some movement of people if only at a 'diplomatic' level. That such an interaction existed can hardly be doubted, since the range of artefacts found in the Arras burials, and elsewhere in the Eastern Zone, demonstrates exchange of goods and ideas with the Continent.

The long-established exchange systems which linked the Eastern Zone with the Continent were maintained throughout the Early and Middle Iron Age, as the range of imported goods reviewed in [chapter 17](#) will show: the distribution patterns suggest that the Thames was a major point of entry. Types of weapon, horse gear and personal ornaments, once adopted in Britain, were soon modified by highly competent local craftsmen. Nowhere is this better shown than with the Hallstatt D daggers found in profusion in the Thames.

Thus the Eastern Zone emerges as a distinct but varied territory facing the North Sea, from across which it absorbed a consistent flow of cultural influences. The settlement pattern, apart from suggesting the emergence of an élite in the eighth century BC, offers little clear hint of development, but the burial rite, adopted exclusively in the region immediately north of the Humber, is indicative of another élite-dominated society lasting for a century or two from the fifth century. Regional variation is well expressed in the ceramic data, but the ritual, involving the deposition of weapons in rivers, established in the second millennium, remained vigorous throughout the Iron Age and serves as a link between the disparate regions of the zone.

The Central Southern Zone

The social development of the Central Southern Zone differs in many ways from that of the Eastern Zone. At the very beginning of the period the spate of bronze 'hoarding' overtakes the region at different times. Along the South Downs, for example, the last major phase of hoarding takes place in the late Ewart Park phase (ninth to eighth centuries), while in Wessex hoarding is concentrated in the subsequent Llyn Fawr phase (eighth to seventh centuries). The rest of the region appears to escape the phenomenon altogether (Thomas 1989). At a simple level of explanation this might suggest two things: that the social changes reflected in hoarding reached

Wessex significantly later than they did the east of Britain, and that the prestige goods economy, of which 'hoarding' is thought to represent the final stages, extended to only part of the Central Southern Zone.

In the late second and early first millennium the settlement evidence suggests the existence of a hierarchy, the upper echelons being represented by sub-rectangular ditched enclosures like Norton Fitzwarren, Highdown Hill, Rams Hill, etc., which appear to occupy central positions in complex exchange networks (Ellison 1981). The distribution of distinctive styles of Deverel–Rimbury pottery add to the evidence for a degree of regionalism. How late into the Late Bronze Age this essentially Middle Bronze Age system extended it is difficult to say, but at Highdown ceramic evidence and other finds suggest occupation as late as the eighth or even seventh century, while at Rams Hill a larger enclosure associated with pottery of the earliest Iron Age replaced the earlier centre. The hints are therefore that this system may have persisted in some places at least into the eighth century.

At some stage within the early first millennium BC a major reorganization of the landscape took place. The most far-reaching change was the reapportionment of land by means of linear earthworks. In some places these cut across old field systems and in others form the axes from which new field systems are laid out. The change focuses on the chalkland of Wessex. Exact dating is difficult to obtain but there are various indications suggesting that the system of linears may have been laid out comparatively late in the eighth or perhaps even the seventh centuries.

The second change dating to about this time was the construction of a number of large hilltop enclosures, extensive in area, slightly defended and often occupying high exposed hill-tops. Where excavation has taken place internal occupation has proved to be slight and was generally restricted to groups of four-post storage structures.

We have suggested (pp. 378–82) that these early enclosures may have been communal structures built to contain and control flocks and herds at certain times during the year. Dating evidence suggests that they lie within the Earliest Iron Age (eighth and seventh centuries).

Direct relationships between linear boundaries and early hill-top enclosures are difficult to demonstrate, but at Danebury a very extensive linear was integrated with a ditched enclosure which encircled the hill before the hillfort was constructed in the Early Iron Age. The only structures associated with this early stage are four-post storage units. A similar relationship between a linear and an early enclosure can be seen at Ladle Hill before the construction of the (unfinished) early hillfort began.

It is tempting to see the linear boundaries and the early hill-top enclosures as components of a single system emerging from the reorganization consequent upon the collapse of the bronze-based prestige goods economy. The very nature of the earthworks implies a far greater control of land and livestock which now may have begun to take precedence as a symbol of status.

The linear earthworks and hill-top enclosures represent the stock-rearing/land-management aspects of the new system. Contemporary occupation sites show some considerable variety. At one end of the spectrum are strongly defended settlements usually occupying ridge-end sites such as Budbury and Lidbury in Wiltshire. Enclosures of this kind have usually produced quantities of occupation debris including a wealth of elaborately made ceramics. Other contemporary settlements like All Cannings Cross and Potterne, equally rich in pottery, appear to be undefended and occupy less dominant positions. A third category, typified by Little Woodbury, Houghton Down and Old Down Farm, consists of ditched enclosures containing the structures of homesteads but have produced comparatively little occupation debris. The evidence is not yet sufficient to allow a detailed social model to be constructed, but it is tempting to see in the defensive works of the ridge-end settlements a display of strength appropriate to the residences of the élite.

The settlement pattern of the Earliest Iron Age represents a marked break with what had gone before. Everything points to an intensified interest in land and territory. The linear boundaries and hill-top enclosures are massive communal undertakings requiring a significant sector of the community to work together under some kind of coercive leadership, while many of the settlements, especially the ditched homesteads, once established continued to be occupied, or were frequently reoccupied, over a period of hundreds of years. In other words a degree of permanence was now developing for the first time.

Throughout the Earliest Iron Age the south coast of Hampshire and

Dorset served as a contact zone linking Britain with Armorica and Normandy. It was through the Solent ports that Armorican axes were imported, and it may have been via the same routes that the inspirations for the elaborately decorated pottery of Early All Cannings Cross type came. These distinctive and highly accomplished wares were widely distributed in Wessex from the Dorset coast to the Berkshire Downs with little evidence of regional variation. Such uniformity must surely imply a degree of ethnic unity binding much of Wessex together as a single social region.

Further to the north, in the Cotswolds and the Welsh borderland, evidence for the earliest occupation is still sparse, but large hill-top enclosures can be identified in the Cotswolds and the earliest slight defence around the exposed hill-top of the Breiddin is best dated to this period. The indications are therefore that similarities with Wessex exist and may be more widespread than at first appears.

The Early Iron Age (c. 550–400/300) saw a significant change in settlement pattern. The hilltop enclosures and ridge-end settlements were widely abandoned and there emerged a large number of early hillforts (pp. 384–7), all of which were sited in well-chosen naturally defensive positions. This fact, together with the strength of their defensive works and occasional evidence of attack, is sufficient to suggest that a more aggressive situation was now developing. The exact chronology of these early hillforts cannot yet be worked out, but there are hints that the earliest are to be found in the Cotswolds. Their spread throughout Wessex and into the Welsh borderland seems to have occurred a little later in the Early Iron Age, during which time a considerable number were erected.

The spread of hillforts over most of the Central Southern Zone in a comparatively short time in the late sixth and fifth centuries must indicate a significant change in the social system. The simplest explanation would be to see this in terms of intensifying pressure on land leading to a situation of stress in which it was necessary to demonstrate proprietorship of territory, the symbol of control being a communal defensive structure. But these early hillforts were more than just symbols. Internal excavation has shown that some of them were intensively occupied, with zones of houses, storage buildings and storage pits leaving little doubt that they were in constant, if not necessarily continuous, use throughout the period. But not all were occupied in this way.

The Middle Iron Age saw a further development which is best characterized as a crystallizing out of the hillfort system: many of the early forts went out of use, but a number were maintained, strengthened and sometimes enlarged. There is also some evidence to suggest that hillforts spread further to the east into Surrey and west

into eastern Devon during this period. This thinning out of numbers is best seen as the result of a coalescence of power at certain centres – in other words the emergence of larger territories after the initial period of hillfort building.

Whatever their symbolic significance, many of these *developed hillforts* were intensively occupied and probably performed a range of central-place functions for their territories. Their massive storage capacities imply the stockpiling of goods for redistribution, while the occurrence in some quantities of bulk raw materials such as shale, querns, salt and iron, produced outside their immediate territories, indicates that it was probably to the forts that these materials were transported before being redistributed to the settlements in the hinterland (Figure 21.3).

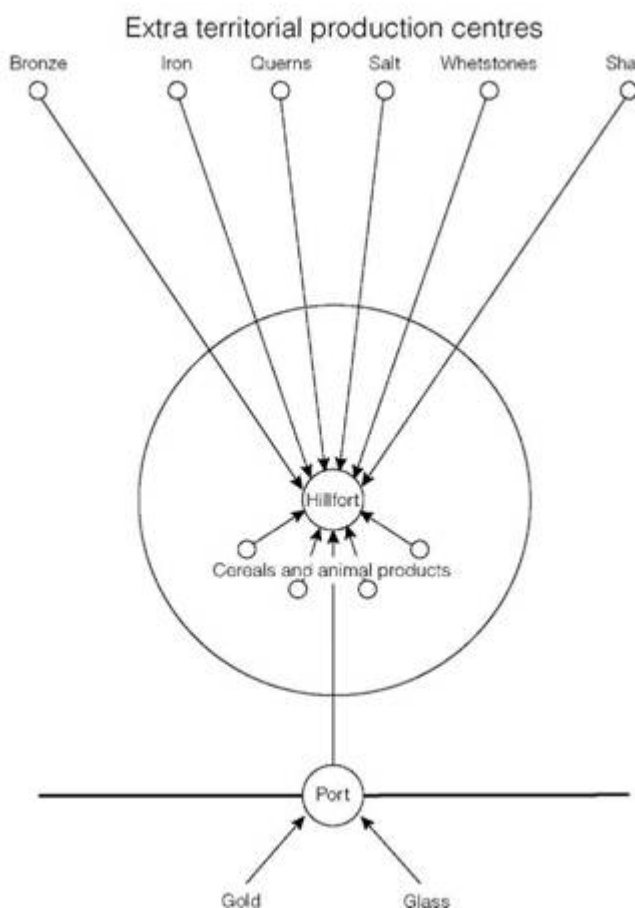


Figure 21.3 Diagram to show the relationship of a developed hillfort like Danebury, to its economic environment (source: author).

What segment of the community was resident in the forts it is impossible to say. Various models have been offered (Cunliffe 1984a, 559–62) but firm evidence is lacking. At best we should see them as centres of communal power dominating and serving territories, but the precise social mechanisms by which these relationships were enacted remain elusive.

By the end of the Middle Iron Age much of the Central Southern Zone appears to have been divided into distinct territories each dominated by a hillfort. The sense of territoriality is further heightened by a consideration of ceramic styles which serve to delineate larger groups, perhaps of ethnic significance ([Figure 21.4](#)). The pattern is clearest towards the end of the Middle Iron Age but many of these zones had already defined themselves in the Early Iron Age. Together the evidence strongly suggests that we are witnessing the emergence of the tribal structure which comes increasingly into focus as the Late Iron Age advances. Since it is difficult to trace these ‘tribal’ regions back before the Early Iron Age it is possible that ethnogenesis did not begin in the Central Southern Zone until the end of the sixth century. The comparatively sudden appearance of hillforts at just this time is surely no coincidence.

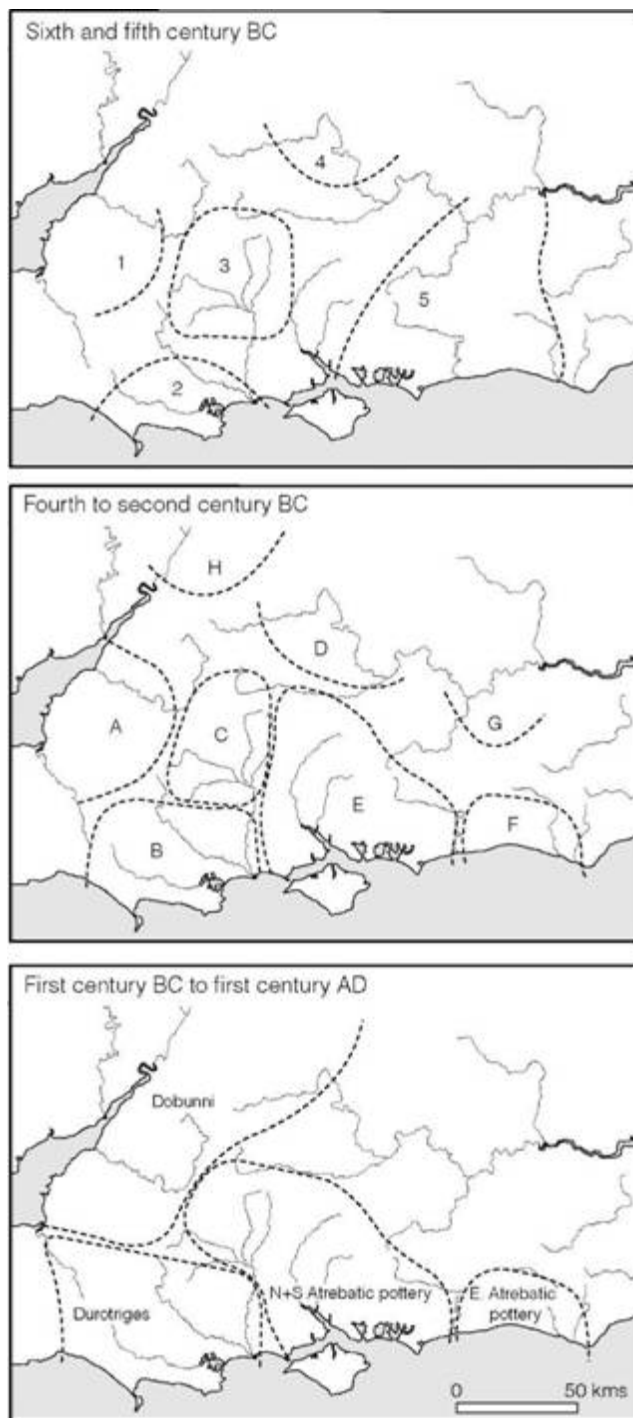


Figure 21.4 *Ethnogenesis in central southern Britain. Distribution of distinctive pottery styles reflecting possible ethnic divisions (source: author).*

The simplest model to contain all the salient facts is one of population growth giving rise to increasing pressure on land. This would lead to territoriality on a local scale manifesting itself in the appearance of a rash of early hillforts and the gradual rationalization of the system as many went out of use while a few rose to dominance. Allegiances on a larger scale created a sense of regional identity visible in the archaeological record as discrete style-zones. Population increase is easy to propose but more difficult to prove. It is significant however that a number of writers viewing different aspects of the settlement data have all suggested an increase of population throughout the Early and Middle Iron Age. Population pressure can lead to stress situations which manifest themselves in different ways: one is in heightened aggression. This could explain the very existence of the hillforts and in particular the growth of more massive defences during the Middle Iron Age. Occasional evidence for attack and the refurbishment of defences shows that there was a need for protection, while mutilated bodies from a number of sites are a reminder of the reality of physical aggression in the Iron Age. It would be wrong, however, to give the impression of constant warfare. No doubt there were long periods of peace. Alliances would be made, held and broken. It is possible that some hillforts were abandoned for periods and reoccupied later. The situation would have been one of constant change but the archaeological evidence is generally too coarse-grained to allow subtleties of this kind to be distinguished.

The ritual systems in operation in the Central Southern Zone are at last becoming clearer. We can now be tolerably sure that the disposal of the dead was governed by complex rituals involving excarnation, with some of the bodies being later buried in cemeteries and possibly the curation of selected bones. But the number of bodies found in abandoned storage pits shows that the behaviour patterns associated with the dead or dying were complicated. Indeed it is worth considering the pits themselves. The consignment of grain, probably seed grain, to a pit is an overcomplex way of solving the storage problem, especially when perfectly serviceable storage buildings were in use at the same time alongside the pits. If, however, the pit itself was a structure dug for ritual purposes it would be easier to understand. The pit could be seen as a means of placing the seed-corn in the realm of the chthonic deities to provide divine protection to ensure its powers of regeneration. If such a system were in operation then propitiatory offerings of humans, animals or sets of artefacts placed on the pit bottoms when the pits were no longer in use would be entirely understandable. Thus the pits themselves, and the propitiatory offerings in them, would represent a distinct belief system, and the distribution of storage pits would demonstrate the

extent of that belief. The concentration of storage pits in the Central Southern Zone is another characteristic which serves to distinguish it from neighbouring zones. However, that pits are absent from the Welsh borderland which is part of the Central Southern Zone suggests that the belief system may not have extended throughout the entire region.

Grain storage pits of Iron Age type have a comparatively limited chronological span. They occur but are uncommon in the Earliest Iron Age: by the Early Iron Age they are extremely numerous and they continue throughout the Middle Iron Age, but become rare again in the Late Iron Age. Thus the *storage pit belief system* developed in the period of stress in which the hill-forts began to develop but was over by the beginning of the Late Iron Age: we will consider the end below (p. 603).

While, clearly, there were regional differences in the Central Southern Zone and a variety of local systems must have been at work, a considerable cultural and developmental similarity can be seen throughout: an increasingly rigorous territoriality emerges associated with evidence of stress and aggression, and for part of the zone at least a belief system concerned with the fertility of the crops is much in evidence. We have suggested that population growth was a significant factor in cultural development. In view of the belief system it may be that soil deterioration, particularly on the light calcareous soils, created another pressure further enhancing stress.

The South-Western Zone

The South-Western Zone includes much of Devon, Cornwall and the south and west of Wales. It is a geographically disparate zone, but basic geology and climate and the importance of the sea serve to create a broadly similar environment within which the settlement systems have developed. By virtue of its west-facing location and the high altitude of some parts of the region the climatic deterioration of the early first millennium had a significant effect, rendering uninhabitable some of the upland areas and, in consequence, putting pressure on the more congenial lowlands.

It is not easy at present to recognize a regular pattern of change in the settlement evidence but certain generalizations appear to hold good for much of the zone. First, hillforts of the type which characterize the Central Southern Zone are virtually unknown, but a few large hill-top enclosures are to be found in upland areas of Wales. These are largely undated but may in some way be associated with the seasonal use of upland pastures throughout all or part of the period. Second, the normal settlement type – the defended homestead – occurs widely throughout the zone and there is now reasonable

evidence to suggest that settlements of this kind increased in number throughout the Middle and Late Iron Age, strongly hinting at a significant increase in population.

Defended settlements vary considerably in form and size and it is best to consider them as a continuum rather than a series of discrete types (Johnson and Rose 1982). The smallest (the rounds and raths) are less than a hectare in size, while the larger sites (the multiple-enclosure forts and cliff castles) may extend to many hectares. Presumably in this gradation we are seeing a social range at the head of which is the élite. The simple model which we have offered above is that the multiple-enclosure forts and the small 'hillforts' represent the homesteads of the aristocrats who expressed their status in terms of the massiveness of their defences. That many of these sites were located and planned with stock management in mind and lie in areas apparently devoid of field systems suggests that wealth and status may have been measured in terms of cattle. This raises a further interesting question: were there two subsystems at work in the west, the low-status freeholders managing the land while the élite maintained herds? This would be consistent with the archaeological evidence but is difficult to test. The corollary of such a divide is that the two subsystems would have had to be linked into a single system by ties of obligation and clientage. If so, the social system of the South-Western Zone would have been very similar to that in operation in early Christian Ireland. The model does not necessarily require the two subsystems to have been co-located within a single region: different environmental potentials may have created regional differentiations, as has been suggested for south-west Wales (Williams 1988).

It is not yet possible to give a convincing account of change through time apart from the point already made that settlement density increases noticeably. Multiple-enclosure forts, however, appear to date to the Middle and Late Iron Age, thus implying that the complex social pattern which they characterize develops comparatively late, some time after c. 400 BC.

One further characteristic of the settlement pattern deserves consideration: the close-spaced nature of some of the settlements. The two landscapes depicted in [Figure 21.5](#) from Cornwall and south Wales, serve to illustrate the point. Not all of the settlements need be contemporary, but many of them are likely to have been at various stages throughout the Iron Age. The pairing of settlements in particular stands out, and it may be that here we are seeing the archaeological manifestation of the Atlantic system of partable inheritance which survived in Wales into the late first millennium AD.

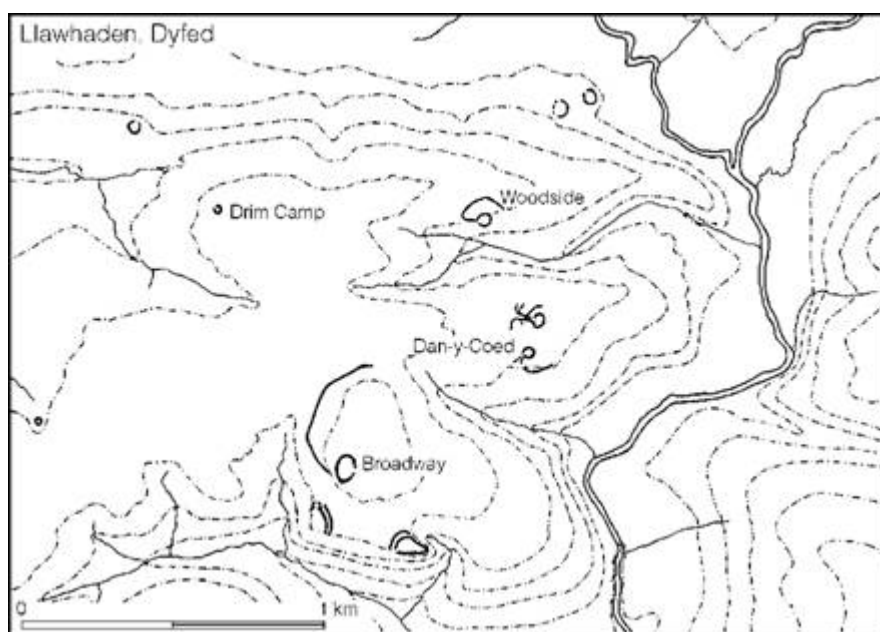
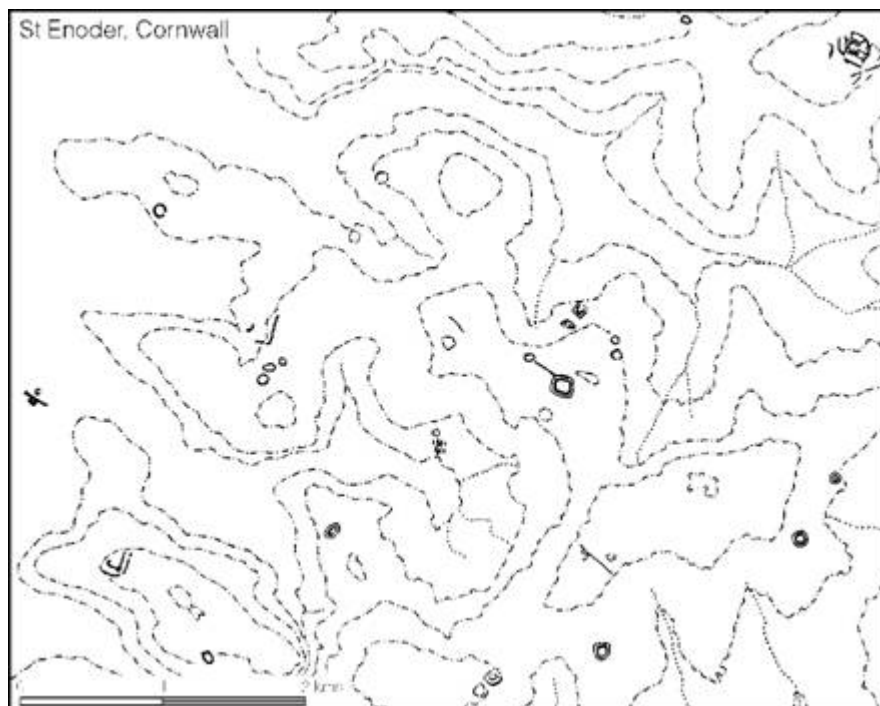


Figure 21.5 Iron Age landscapes in the south-west of Britain. St Enoder, Cornwall (source: Johnson and Rose 1982) and Llawhaden, Dyfed (source: G. Williams 1988).

The belief systems of the south-west are at present ill-defined, but where burial evidence survives, the rite was invariably inhumation usually in stone-built cists and usually arranged in cemeteries, spanning the Middle and Late Iron Age. It therefore differs significantly from that of the Central Southern Zone. Another difference is the absence of storage pits, but this is hardly surprising if the subsistence system was differently structured. Evidence for ritual behaviour, while limited, also shows distinct regional characteristics, with a preference for depositing luxury goods in bogs. While it could be argued that this is more a reflection of the prevalence of bogs in the south-west, the fact that so many bog finds have been made, and virtually none from rivers, must surely indicate a specific set of distinctive beliefs associated with the sanctity of this type of watery location. If the apparent contrast with the belief system of the Central Southern Zone is valid then it could be explained in terms of the differences between a cattle-dominated economy in which water and upland pasture were vital and a corn-dominated economy depending on the fertility of the earth – though the antithesis may seem a little far-fetched.

There is little evidence from the South-Western Zone of rigorous territoriality of the kind which can be recognized in the Central Southern Zone and this might be thought to support the social model which we have suggested for the region, with centralization of power and services not extending beyond the level of a minor dispersed aristocracy. High-quality ceramics were being produced in the south-west but they were widely distributed and not restricted to distinct territories. Thus there is no hint of the tribal or sub-tribal grouping, which we can recognize in the Central Southern Zone. By the beginning of the historic period tribal names like the Dumnonii, Silures, Demetae and Ordovices are recorded, but they tend to occupy geographically distinct territories divided from each other by mountains or the sea. In such circumstances tribal conflict is unlikely to have broken out and thus the need to define ethnicity would have been minimized.

Contact with the adjacent Continent was maintained throughout the Iron Age and is most evident in the parallel development of material culture and settlement pattern which occurred between Cornwall and Brittany. No doubt trade in tin and other commodities contributed but other forms of social intercourse are likely. The exchange systems extended into the Severn estuary and seem to have involved the communities of Silurian territory, but beyond this south Welsh fringe, to the west and north, there is little evidence of contact.

The social, economic and religious systems, once established, were maintained little changed throughout the Late Iron Age into the

The North-Western Zone

The North-Western Zone, stretching from Galloway to Shetland, constitutes a well-defined physical region: an Atlantic province of indented coasts and uplands with a distinctive settlement pattern characterized by strongly defended homesteads – the duns of the southern part of the zone and the brochs of the north collectively known as complex Atlantic roundhouses. Comparatively little variety can be discerned among the settlements that might suggest significant social differentiations, except that in Orkney a number of the brochs became central elements in small defended villages, while on the Outer Hebrides different densities of settlement hint at regional variations in social systems.

Several important excavations have allowed some threads of chronological development to be distinguished. Simply stated, the first half of the first millennium BC seems to have been a time of open settlements sometimes large enough to be classed as hamlets. Defensive architecture was more a feature of the later first millennium, with the brochs beginning to emerge as a frequent element in the north from the second century BC onwards (though originating some time earlier). Brochs were sometimes built within existing fortified sites, and a few, as we have said, went on to become centres of small villages. The most obvious facet of this development sequence is the increasing emphasis placed on defensive appearance. There is no direct evidence to suggest that this was brought about by pressure on land, and indeed a survey of settlement pattern and resource potential in Shetland shows that the holding capacity had by no means been reached (Fojut 1982b). The simplest explanation, therefore, is that defensive appearance was more a matter of social display than of military need.

The economic systems of the North-Western Zone seem to have been small-scale and based on the self-sufficiency of the individual settlement: no extensive exchange networks are known to have existed, but the sea must have provided a constantly used mode of communication between communities.

Our knowledge of belief systems is limited. Burials are rare, as indeed are ritual deposits or evidence of behaviour which might be interpreted as ritual. While this does not imply that belief systems were impoverished it strongly suggests that they differed significantly from those of the south. That said, care is necessary in offering such generalizations. The discovery of a number of special deposits beneath the floor of the wheelhouse of Sollas, North Uist, is a reminder that thorough excavation of more sites may yet provide unexpected

evidence of ritual behaviour.

The North-Eastern Zone

The North-Eastern Zone stretching from the Yorkshire Moors to the foothills of the Grampians is an extremely varied area made up of a number of regions displaying cultural and economic variation. This variation, together with a general lack of extensive evidence for sequential development and a paucity of material culture, makes it difficult to offer general statements about social and economic change except at a very simple level.

What stands out from the settlement pattern evidence, which has been extensively explored, is that the basic unit was the enclosed homestead, the method of enclosure changing over time from timber palisades to banks and ditches. Variation in size of these enclosures seems to reflect different social configurations, but only in rare instances do these seem to exceed two or three extended families living together.

Hillforts occur in small numbers but for most their chronology and function remain obscure. What little evidence there is suggests a general scattering of Early Iron Age forts, like the early hillforts of southern England, the majority of which have ceased to be occupied by the beginning of the Middle Iron Age. This holds good for the region south of the Tyne–Firth line, but to the north, especially in the valley of the Tweed and on either side of the Firth of Forth, a number of comparatively large and well-defended hillforts are known, some of which can be shown to have been in use during the Middle Iron Age and later. Thus we can recognize two distinctive regimes within the North-Eastern Zone, in the northern of which some kind of social hierarchy, not unlike that of the Central Southern Zone, can be distinguished. Something of the potential complexities of this hierarchization are beginning to emerge as the result of the excavation of the defended settlement of Broxmouth and other sites in the region.

It is difficult at this stage to offer a comprehensive assessment of change through time. The abandonment of some of the upland regions as a result of climatic change early in the first millennium is now fairly well established and in many areas continuity of settlement over several centuries can be demonstrated. There are also indications that the landscape was beginning to fill up, and it may be that the increase in strength of defensive works over time reflects periods of stress, but it could equally be argued that style of enclosure was used as a demonstration of status in a society which was becoming increasingly stratified.

There is little that can be said of ritual and religious systems in the North-Eastern Zone. Inhumation burials in small cemeteries are

known but are not particularly common. The rite of depositing weapons and other valuable items of metalwork in rivers is reasonably well attested. Thus the North-Eastern Zone shares certain cultural characteristics with the Eastern Zone.

Summary of the Earliest, Early and Middle Iron Age, c. 800–100 BC

The comments offered so far in this chapter are in themselves a summary of the preceding twenty chapters, and here we step back still further to attempt an even broader perspective ([Figure 21.6](#)). Perhaps the simplest generalization is that culturally Britain in the Iron Age divides east–west and north–south. The north–south divide separates the southern part with its more moderate climate and ease of contact with the adjacent Continent from the harsher, more isolated north, while the east–west divide allows us to distinguish a western, Atlantic, zone with its damper climate and fragmented landscape from the eastern, North Sea, zone, drier and more open. These various constraints have helped to mould the Iron Age communities of Britain.

A quite separate theme has contributed to the variety – that of population increase. Throughout the whole island there is evidence of a constant growth in the density of settlement, and in some regions, particularly the Central Southern Zone, the population appears to have come under stress exacerbated perhaps by falling crop yields. Growth of population was one of the factors which led to the crystallizing out of well-defined social hierarchies accompanied, especially in the centre south, by a degree of territoriality.

To what extent we can generalize about social and ritual systems is debatable, but the east–west divide seems to be valid. In the west the social system was based on a simple hierarchical divide with a numerous élite – rather like petty lords. In the east social agglomerations were often larger and there appear to have been a number of sites which can reasonably be called villages, extending over quite considerable territories, in use for generations. This kind of settlement pattern, and the social system which it implies, is very similar to that of the adjacent Continent. Between the two lies the hillfort-dominated zone of central southern Britain with an outlier in the north-east. The very existence of these large forts, maintained over centuries and intensively used, shows that a totally different system was in operation, some of the forts presumably performing a range of central functions for the territories they dominated.

This simple threefold social divide is also borne out by what little we know of ritual systems: the west with its inhumation cemeteries

and votive offerings in bogs, the east with its emphasis on the deposition of weapons in rivers, and the centre with excarnation being the normal rite associated with a developed system of propitiation to ensure fertility.

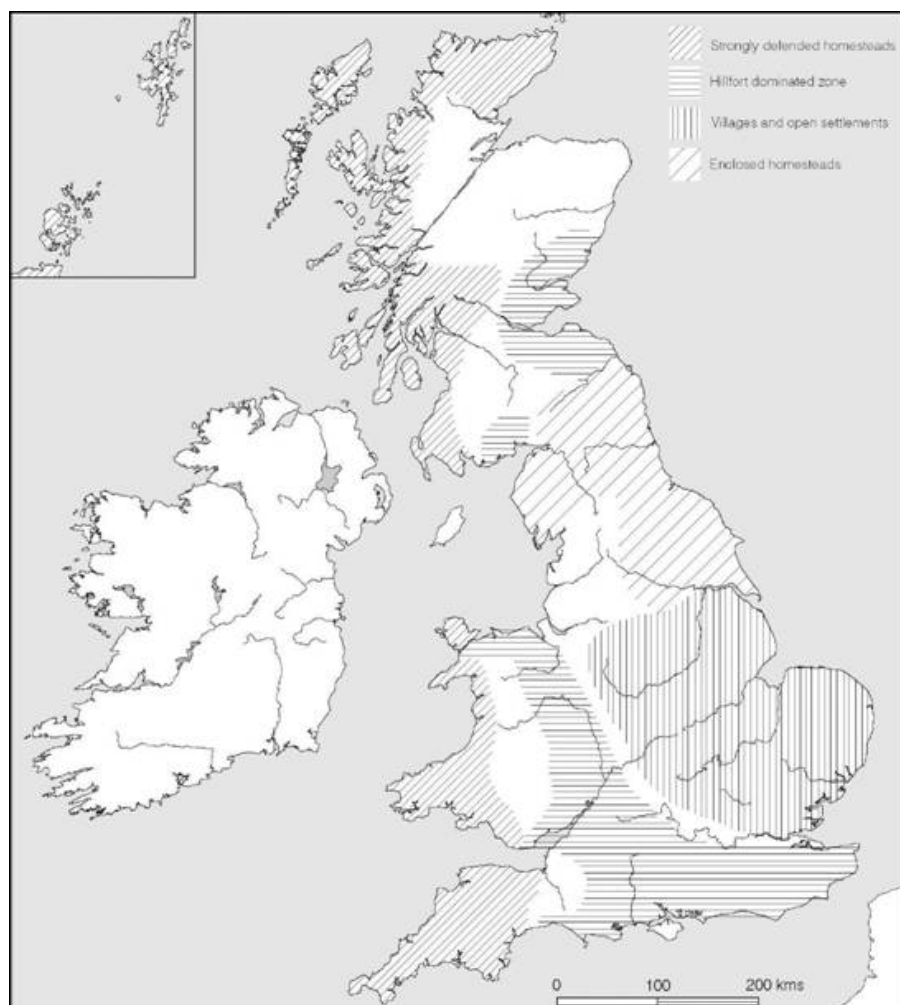


Figure 21.6 *Settlement types in Britain c. 150 BC (source: author).*

The interaction of these three broad socio-religious systems is a matter of great potential interest but one which we cannot yet begin to approach. Indeed until far more is known about the workings of the individual system at a local and regional level it is doubtful if any significant advance will be made in understanding the broader issues. One idea which might, however, be worth exploring is to see the eastern and western systems as essentially stable (as indeed the

archaeological evidence seems to suggest), with the central southern system being unstable, its instability caused or enhanced by virtue of its intermediate location. This idea has some attraction in that it emphasizes the dynamic relationships between zonal systems, a theme from which considerable illumination may eventually come.

The Late Iron Age reorganization c. 100 BC–AD 43

Until the end of the second century BC it can fairly be said that Britain lay beyond the periphery of the Mediterranean world. Admittedly certain commodities such as Cornish tin found their way into the Mediterranean system, but only by means which distanced totally the producing communities from the consumers. But all this was to be changed in the closing decades of the second century BC when the Romans began to colonize the southern shores of Gaul. The period, roughly 120–60 BC, saw the establishment of a stable Roman system in the south. During this time the rest of Gaul and southern Britain beyond became a periphery to that system and Britain began to experience the bow-wave effect of Romanization. Then in the decade 60–50 BC Julius Caesar extended Rome's direct influence over the whole of Gaul, changing Britain's position from being on the distant edge of that periphery into one of immediate proximity.

We can use this simple historical model to structure our discussion of the changes which came about in Britain. The first period, c. 120–60 BC, can be called the *contact period*, the second c. 60–50 BC is the *Caesarean episode*, while the third period, c. 50 BC to AD 43 is the *impact period*.

The contact period c. 120–60 BC

There is no need to suppose that developing Roman interests in the barbarian west created entirely new modes of exchange. In all probability the movement of commodities took place largely within existing social systems, the only significant difference being the intensity and volume of the materials passing along the traditional axes of contact. This appears to have been how it was with Britain. The first evidence of Roman contact came along the Atlantic sea-ways which had functioned as routes of communication for 4,000 years or more. The ports of entry were on the Dorset coast at Hengistbury and Poole Harbour. These were linked directly, via the Channel Islands, to ports on the north coast of Brittany, and from these, by transshipment and short-haul traffic, commodities passed to the mouths of the Loire and Gironde and via the great rivers and short overland portages to

the ports on the Mediterranean coasts of Gaul.

The Roman demand for raw materials such as metals and hides, corn and slaves, created an entirely new situation in Britain. These products were suddenly endowed with a greatly increased value and could be used to procure luxury items such as Italian wine, coloured glass trinkets and no doubt a good deal more besides. External demand would have provided the impetus for production. Metals extracted in various parts of western Britain were now transported in bulk to the Dorset ports for refinement and transshipment – lead/silver from the Mendips, copper/silver from the Dartmoor fringes and tin from Cornwall. Long-established exchange mechanisms between the South-Western Zone and the Central Southern Zone would no doubt have provided the systems by which these products were moved to the ports and stockpiled for export. Grain and hides were probably acquired in a similar way. None of this need have greatly disrupted existing systems of production and exchange, but the demand for slaves was an entirely new factor. While slavery no doubt existed in Iron Age Britain the production of slaves for export cannot have failed to have had a dramatic effect on social systems and may have been as disruptive in Britain in the first century BC as it was in west Africa in the seventeenth century AD.

The range of items traded and the routes used can be distinguished reasonably accurately from the archaeological evidence, but the volume and consistency of the traffic cannot. All that can safely be said from the limited excavation at Hengistbury is that considerable quantities of Italian wine were being brought in over a period of time.

Italian wine and other luxury goods provided the élite of central southern Britain with an entirely new means of displaying prestige. It may be no accident that it was at this time that the hillforts of the region went out of regular use. If we were correct in interpreting them as central places controlling redistribution in a society in which raiding was prevalent, then their demise can most easily be explained in terms of the breakdown of the old system and its replacement by something new. It may be that access to a new range of prestige goods provided the élite with a mode of display which replaced raiding as a means of establishing and maintaining prowess. The symbols of that system – the hillforts – could then be abandoned and the function of redistribution could be transferred to more convenient locations on route nodes where major land routes crossed rivers. The enclosed oppida which developed in these valley sites are thus explained. In any event the abandonment of hillforts by the middle of the first century BC appears to have been restricted to the chalklands of the south – the region most directly affected by the Roman- inspired trade of the contact period.

The Eastern Zone was not immediately influenced by the bow-wave effect. Close social contact did however exist between the communities of the south-east, bordering the Thames estuary, and those of the neighbouring ports of Belgic Gaul. This is most clearly demonstrated by the distribution of Gallo-Belgic coinage in south-eastern Britain ([Figure 21.7](#)). At a superficial level this looks like a sudden new development but there is no need to interpret it in this way. Contact between the two areas was long established and the exchange of items and ideas had been part of the social scene for centuries. The appearance of Gallo-Belgic coins in the south-east was merely another manifestation of the social interactions linking the communities on either side of the Channel.

There was, however, one significant development – the appearance of low-denomination coinage in Kent well before the Caesarean episode. While the gold staters of Gallo-Belgic type no doubt changed hands in gift-exchange systems, low-denomination coinage – the so-called ‘potins’ – implies the beginning of a market economy. It could therefore be that the distribution of Gallo-Belgic coinage in Britain represents an intensification of traditional social links brought about by enhanced trade between the two regions. The development of local markets in Britain would be a natural follow-on. What motivated the intensification is difficult to say – perhaps it was one of the bow-wave effects of Romanization working, in this instance, through Belgic middlemen in northern Gaul.

One further factor must briefly be mentioned – the possible migration of a Continental Belgic community to southern Britain. The question has been considered above (pp. 126–7). Here all that need be said is that an incursion probably took place in the Solent region some time during this period, adding another destabilizing factor to the already fluid situation.

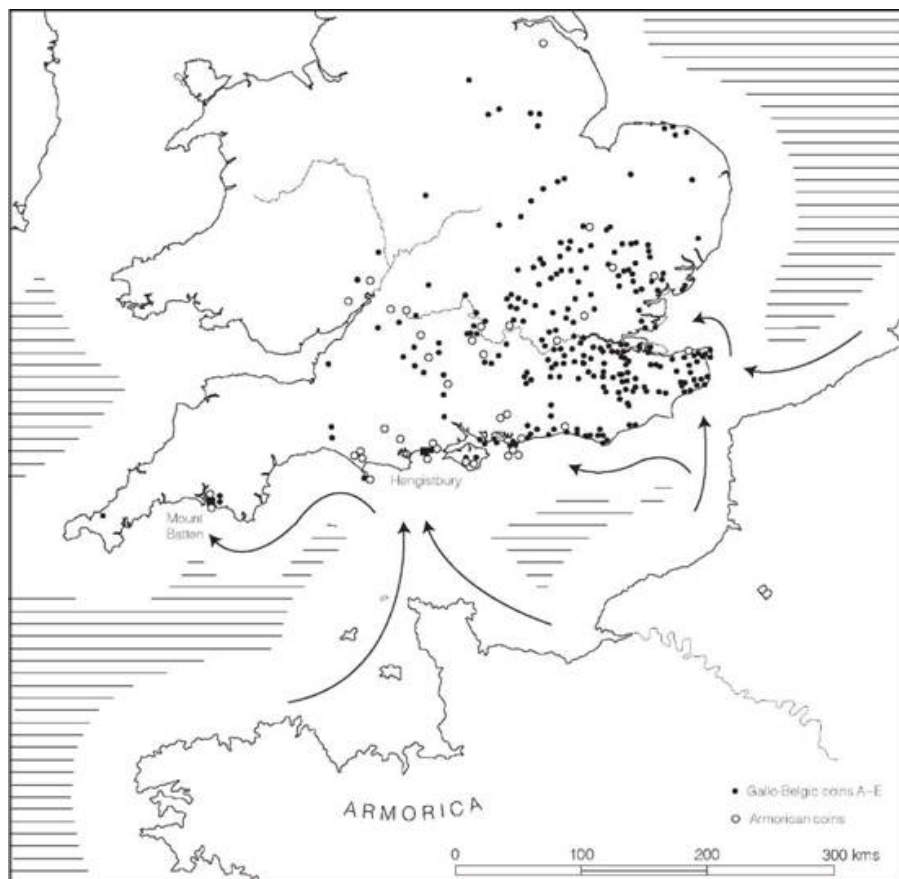


Figure 21.7 Britain and the Continent c. 100–150 BC. The shaded area of sea represents areas within easy reach of land, i.e. no more than 30 miles from land (source: author).

The impact period

Caesar's invasion and the political settlement which followed deflected the trajectory of change already under way. Whether by deliberate political design or by the natural reordering of axes of contact, the impact of Roman trading pressures swung from the Atlantic–Solent route to the Belgica–Thames route. Hengistbury and the Dorset ports declined while the ports of Kent and Essex rose dramatically in importance. Within a few decades of Caesar's invasion the Solent and its hinterland had become a backwater, a fact vividly demonstrated by the rapid impoverishment of Durotrigan coinage. Meanwhile the volume of trade goods reaching the communities of eastern Britain had begun to increase very substantially.

While this could be explained entirely in political terms, by Caesar

offering trading monopolies to the eastern tribes who had concluded peace treaties with him, it is more likely to be the result of the simple fact that the Thames estuary was conveniently placed to link to the newly established Roman road systems in Gaul and to the Rhine corridor which was fast becoming a major trade route. Thus in the period following the Caesarean episode the Essex coast became the main interface with the Roman world.

For a while it seems that the exchange processes were articulated through traditional systems allowing the Belgic tribes of Gaul to act as middlemen, but gradually by about 10 BC more direct trade with the Rhine mouth seems to have taken over.

The effects of all this on the tribes of south-eastern Britain were far-reaching. While the old divide between the Eastern and Central Southern Zones was to some extent maintained, a new zonal configuration emerged. The south-east, roughly up to a line joining the Wash to the Hampshire Avon, became a *core zone* beyond which lay a *periphery* extending up to the Humber–Trent–Severn–Exe line. Beyond that, old configurations remained largely untouched, to continue much as they had in the Early and Middle Iron Age.

The core zone divided politically into two power blocks roughly separated by the Thames, though with Kent and Surrey floating between them. This reflects the traditional divide between the Eastern and Central Southern Zones. Real power lay with the north of the Thames group – the Catuvellauni/Trinovantes and their allies or dependants, the Iceni. The group to the south – the Atrebates – were largely excluded from the benefits of direct trade with the Roman world but the productivity of the territory and their long interface with the peripheral tribes allowed a degree of socio-political development similar to the tribes of the northern configuration. It was in this core zone that oppida developed and a market economy began to emerge. Phases of dynastic instability and a jockeying for control over the border regions between the two power blocs created tension but there is little evidence of extensive aggression.

But changes went deeper than the socio-political system. New belief systems were adopted, and cremation, in small cemeteries, became the normal burial rite. The deposition of weapons in rivers declined dramatically and so too did the storage of grain in pits with the accompanying propitiatory rites. It is changes of this kind, bringing to an end traditions centuries old, which show just how fast society was evolving and how deep were the upheavals.

Around the core was a peripheral zone comprising four tribal configurations: the Durotriges, Dobunni, Iceni and Corieltavi. All four issued coins and in each territory there are signs of the centralization of market activities at convenient route nodes. Thus the

peripheral tribes shared some of the characteristics of the core but were culturally separate from it.

The dynamic relationships between core, periphery and the territories beyond was a complicated one. At its simplest the periphery facilitated the movement of raw materials and manpower from the territories beyond to the core where they were consumed or traded on to the Roman world. Products from the periphery would have joined this drift. In reverse some luxury goods, particularly imported pottery, and gold passed back to the periphery, and some part of that, together with local products, was traded out to the tribes beyond. The elements of this system can be traced in the archaeological record. The élite, by virtue of their status and their control over trade routes, were able to acquire added wealth, leading to the emergence of a prestige goods economy manifest in the rich burials of Essex, Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire.

On the eve of the Roman invasion of AD 43 the system had been in full operation for several decades and appears to have reached a degree of equilibrium maintained by the authority of

Cunobelin – the ‘great king of Britain’. It was his death about AD 40 and the destabilization which followed that gave the Emperor Claudius his opportunity to gain military honours through conquest.

The Roman authorities clearly understood the political geography of Britain: the core was totally annexed, the periphery became a military buffer zone linked from one end to the other by the military road known as the Fosse Way, while the tribes beyond were left to their own devices until their continued hostility forced Rome, reluctantly, to continue its advance to the west and north.

The beginning of the Roman interlude

The ease with which the south-east was overrun by the army of Aulus Plautius between AD 43 and 47 was in some part a measure of incipient Romanization – after all, ‘eleven kings’ were prepared to throw in their lot with Rome immediately. The economy and social structure of the area had developed so far towards a fully urbanized state that effective resistance was no longer possible or, in the minds of many, desirable. The abortive attempt by the resistance army, led by Togodumnus and Caratacus, failed. Togodumnus was killed while Caratacus was forced to beat a retreat to the west, where the pleasures of the Roman life-style were largely unknown. There, among the mountain tribes of Wales, he stirred up such trouble that Ostorius Scapula was forced to take action by occupying a considerable area of the Midlands before routing out the ringleader, who was finally captured as the result of native treachery.

Other war leaders followed: Boudica in 60 spearheading the

rebellion in eastern England, Venutius about ten years later leading the Brigantes against the advance of Cerialis, and ultimately Calgacus opposing the final thrust of Agricola into Scotland. On each occasion the British tribes showed an ability to unite under one leader, but resistance was seldom sustained for long and inevitably collapsed without lasting effect. The furious impetus of the Boudican rebellion and the total lack of forward planning is perfectly in keeping with the stereotype of the Celt favoured by the Romans.

As the areas of conflict moved away from the south-east, Roman civilization rapidly took root. Old tribal boundaries, many of them going back for centuries, were adopted as administrative boundaries while many native oppida became Roman towns. In a vivid and cynical piece of prose Tacitus explains, with obvious relish, the processes of social change:

To induce a people, hitherto scattered and uncivilized, and therefore prone to fight, to grow pleurably inured to peace and ease, Agricola gave private encouragement and official assistance to the building of the temples, public squares and private mansions. He praised the keen and scolded the slack, and competition for honour proved as effective as compulsion. Furthermore, he trained the sons of the chiefs in the liberal arts and expressed a preference for British natural ability over the trained skill of the Gauls. The result was that in place of distaste for the Latin language came a passion to command it. In the same way, our national dress came into favour and the toga was everywhere to be seen. And so the Britons were gradually led on to the amenities that make vice agreeable – arcades, baths and sumptuous banquets. They spoke of such novelties as ‘civilization’ when really they were only a feature of their enslavement.
(Agricola, xxi)

Much of this would have been true of the lowland areas of the province. The Roman money economy, and the ease of trading which the *pax Romana* made so possible, would have allowed the easy accumulation of wealth. In the Roman hierarchical system social and administrative status was totally dependent on money qualifications. Moreover, land could now be bought. These new factors brought about a total revolution in society: the old clan system, with its dynastic leadership based on prestige and birth, gave way to capitalism. But in the highland areas much of the old order would have prevailed. The survival of the Gaelic and Welsh law and literature with its echo of the past is sufficient to demonstrate the fact, but in many ways an even more dramatic reminder is found in a seventh-century document, the Ravenna Cosmography, which lists for Scotland a number of *loca* – the meeting places for the northern tribes

in the third century AD. These tribal foci are part of a social tradition which we have been able to trace back to the beginning of the first millennium, and which must have been distantly rooted among the Neolithic communities of the third millennium. They symbolize above all the strong undercurrent of tradition which characterizes so much of British prehistory.

Models, systems and beyond

The Iron Age, like all prehistoric periods, has been subject to changing fashions in explanation. Each generation of scholars has imposed its own preconceptions and prejudices in an attempt to make sense of the disparate scraps of evidence that have gradually accumulated. Inevitably, as the database increases and perceptions change, new generations of archaeologists improve upon, and sometimes reject, the interpretations of their predecessors. In this way all sciences advance.

In [chapter 1](#) we have traced, in some detail, the development of the discipline over the last hundred and fifty years or so, but to understand where we are at present an even broader perspective is needed. Standing back from the detail, four distinct periods can be identified. In the first, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, antiquarians attempting to understand the past had access to classical sources like the *Gallic Wars* of Julius Caesar and the *Agricola* of Tacitus. They were also aware of field monuments, especially the barrows and hillforts, and a few British coins were beginning to be identified, but there was little other tangible evidence for them to use. Thus the ancient Britons were roughly sketched in the mode of contemporary ‘primitive’ peoples, particularly native North Americans.

The beginning of the eighteenth century saw the introduction of a potent new source of evidence into the debate – the study of the ancient languages of the British Isles, Brittany and Ireland which the pioneer researcher Edward Lhuyd chose to call ‘Celtic’. He explained the differences he had identified in terms of successive invasions from Continental Europe. It was a powerful model which, remarkably, remained unchallenged for nearly three centuries and provided the underlying rationale for the invasionist models which were to develop, in their increasing complexity, during the twentieth century until the early 1960s when the challenge finally came. In retrospect it now seems more than a little naive to have explained all change in terms of the arrival of new people from the Continent, but given the power of the linguistic model it was natural to accept a succession of immigrations stretching back in time: the Roman invasion of AD 43 was a well-attested fact, as were Caesar’s invasions of 55 and 54 BC.

Before that Caesar writes of an influx of Belgae from northern Gaul settling in the coastal areas of Britain. It was not an illogical step, therefore, to suppose that a series of such incursions extended deep into prehistory, each to be identified by a recognizable change in the archaeological record. So it was that a pseudo-historical model was created to explain change. That it broadly conformed to the linguistic model gave reassurance.

The challenge to the invasionist model in the early 1960s toppled the old edifice but not all 'invasions' were entirely swept away. The close similarities of the Arras burial rite of east Yorkshire and that of parts of northern Gaul imply that links existed in the late fifth or early fourth century involving some movement of people, while Caesar's 'Belgic' immigration can be accommodated in the archaeological evidence of the Solent region. Yet that said, the key question remaining unanswered is the scale on which the movement took place. A small influential élite would have been quite sufficient to have triggered changes of this kind.

After a period of near-denial it is now becoming widely accepted that networks of interaction using very long-established shipping routes linked coastal regions of Britain with the adjacent Continent, and that through these networks materials and ideas were constantly being exchanged. For this to have happened people must have travelled. It is one of the challenges facing Iron Age studies today to identify these patterns and if possible to quantify the intensity of the interactions. In this way we will be better able to understand the dynamics of social and economic change in the different parts of Britain.

The decade 1960–1970 was a time of transformation in British Iron Age studies. With the collapse of the invasionist model came the need to build a new interpretative structure. Twenty years earlier Christopher Hawkes had called for 'cultural' definition within the Iron Age (Hawkes 1939a). In this he was thinking of the then-current way in which archaeological cultures were being defined by prehistorians like Gordon Childe. In 1964 Roy Hodson went some way towards defining basic folk cultures for southern Britain, to be followed by Ewen MacKie for the north (1969a). However, apart from underlining the basic unity of Iron Age culture over the country as a whole, the approach had little to offer. The communities of Britain were in such close contact and shared so many systems in common that their similarities far outweighed the significance of their differences.

Towards the end of the 1960s attention was beginning to turn to a range of analytical techniques, then current in geography and the social sciences, in an attempt to look at archaeological data in a new way in the hope of developing new conceptual models. At the very

least these offered some hope of identifying new structures inherent in the data. The settlement pattern in the south-western peninsula was subjected to nearest neighbour analysis (Newcomb 1968, 1970), while hillforts in southern Britain were seen as fair game for various species of locational analysis (Hogg 1971; Cunliffe 1976b; Groube 1981; Grant 1986). The limitations of these approaches soon became apparent: it was little use employing sophisticated techniques on a database that was so poorly characterized. In parallel with these experiments with 'new geography', simple economic theory was being applied to the study of Celtic coinage (Collis 1971a and b; Hogg 1971) but once again the limitations of the data brought criticism (Rodwell 1976).

The decade of experiment in Iron Age studies overlapped with the development of what was at the time called the 'new archaeology' and is now referred to as the *processual approach*. Processual archaeology takes a positivist stance and relies heavily on systems theory which sees societies in terms of a network of sub-systems interacting with each other and with the environment through a series of feed-back mechanisms. In moving away from an emphasis on event or straightforward description, the systems approach focuses on the dynamics within society and attempts to identify the causes of change which sets a system on a particular trajectory.

The classic example of a processual study was David Clarke's analysis of the Glastonbury lake village (Clarke 1972), which became widely influential. A later more thorough study of the database, however, failed to find any support for Clarke's main thesis (Coles and Minnitt 1995). It would seem that Clarke had not fully appreciated the nature and limitations of the evidence and had made jumps between observation and interpretation that could not be sustained. This by no means discredits the systems approach but it does emphasize that to be effective the evidence used has to be carefully controlled and preferably generated through a well-designed programme of fieldwork and excavation.

By the mid-1980s processual archaeology was coming under attack by a younger generation of archaeologists who were reacting against the positivist approach that underpinned it. The new direction, for which the name *post-processual* was coined, owed much to hermeneutics and post-structuralism. Post-structuralism challenged the underlying tenets of structuralism which believed that there was a direct relationship between signs and meaning, arguing instead that meaning could only be understood within the context of the individual. Since people are the knowledgeable agents, to understand past social phenomena it is necessary to focus on the intention, meaning and signification of any particular action. Only in this way

could the character of social reality be identified. Clearly the challenge of the post-processual approach is for the observer – the archaeologist – to create a narrative which bridges the yawning gap between the highly imperfect archaeological evidence and the behaviour and beliefs of individuals in the prehistoric past. This places a particular demand on the observer to be rigorous and to accept the potential validity of alternative discourses.

The changing theoretical and philosophical framework over the last forty years has had a considerable impact on the way in which some practitioners have chosen to present and analyse data. Simply stated while the 1960s and 1970s saw an emphasis on studies of environment, production and economy the eighties and nineties have seen greater attention being paid to beliefs, behaviour, identity and concepts of place and space.

The rapid development of new archaeological theory, and the desire to discredit the old, has generated much polemic and sometimes a rather strident and ill-tempered presentation which, while understandable, creates an entirely false appearance of polarization. In practice most archaeologists immersed in the reality of fieldwork and excavation, and the analysis and publication of their material, have learned from the theoretical debate, drawing from it what is useful and appropriate, their analyses feeding back into and informing the discourse. In this way Iron Age studies in Britain have developed dramatically. It could fairly be argued that the creativeness of the debate together with the large and rapidly increasing database and the subject's interface with history has made Iron Age studies one of the most lively areas in British archaeology. To illustrate changing aspirations I would like briefly to indicate how one project – the Danebury Environs Project – developed during this period. In the first edition of this book, written in 1971 and published in 1974, I concluded the final chapter by saying:

The questions which we are asking of our material today are far more complex than those posed in the past: they concern change and equilibrium. The methods of study are necessarily more arduous and lengthy, but if the subject is to progress rather than accrete, we must not be afraid to undertake projects requiring broader vision and rigorous discipline.

This was written in the months following the third season of excavation of the hillfort of Danebury when, after the first area excavation within the fort, the sheer complexity of the database became starkly apparent and the way forward seemed daunting.

The Danebury project, which began in 1969, was designed

specifically to provide the range and quantity of data necessary to allow the systems inherent in Iron Age society to be studied in detail. From the outset the excavation was conceived of as a long-term project embedded within a study of the contemporary landscape. After twenty seasons of excavation at Danebury, during which more than half of the interior was excavated, attention turned to other settlements in the region. In the next eight seasons (1989–96) eight settlements were examined. The size of the study area (450 sq km) and the input of effort (twenty-eight seasons of excavation) produced a dataset of a scale commensurate with the research questions we set out to address.

The approach to the data recovered changed over time as the processual/post-processual debate raged. Initially the project was focused on a systems approach in an attempt to model production and exchange systems and to understand the causes of change inherent within them, but even as early as 1971 it was becoming evident that within the disused storage pits were preserved patterns of disposal which represented deliberate and structured behaviour: by 1984 we were publishing our first analyses of them. As the project developed, behaviour patterns reflected in ‘special deposits’ became a major area of interest. Another theme to emerge was the symbolic nature of boundaries and the social significance of their different rhythms of renewal, reflected in the maintenance of ditches and ramparts and the building of houses. The interpretation of structured space in relation to taboos associated with entrance, exit and procession through was also considered. In parallel with all this, the complexity of the *rite de passage* of death became apparent as the dataset grew, suggesting that excarnation played a large part with the careful curation of ancestral body parts. By the end of the project many of the questions being addressed were highly appropriate to the post-processual agenda.

The example shows, I believe, that far from being separate, theory and practice run together in a mutually enhancing way and that confrontations between different theoretical credos have more to do with egos and personalities than with real differences in the objectives of research. When all the sound and fury have evaporated what remains is a steady progress in our understanding of Iron Age society.

How to present such a complex array of information presents an interesting challenge. The method adopted in this book is essentially a systems approach which takes cognizance of regional variation. As more data accumulate it will become increasingly possible to give greater emphasis to regionality and to questions of interregional mobility, moving on to broader generalizations after the regional systems have been characterized and reviewed. In due course this may prove to be the most convenient way to order such a disparate array

of material.

An altogether different approach is that developed by the amazingly fertile school of French historical thinkers – the *Annales School* – among whom Febvre, Bloch, Duby and Braudel were the most influential of the pioneers. Braudel was especially conscious of the different rhythms of change in the past, distinguishing three categories of time:

- The *longue durée* – defined as ‘a history in which all change is slow, a history of constant repetition, of ever recurring cycles’. This is *geographical time*.
- Conjonctures – medium-term cycles of half a century or so reflected in wars or economic trends. This is *social time*.
- L’histoire événementielle???? – political or diplomatic change or change initiated by individuals: the short-termism of politics. This is *individual time*.

Such an approach provides a potentially fruitful way of looking at the British Iron Age. Under *geographical time* one might describe the daily life of communities, the farming regime, production, networks of exchange and ritual practices and long-term trends such as climatic change and population growth. *Social time* would include the introduction of new cropping techniques and the breaking of new land; the development of a sense of territoriality leading to a definition of boundaries; intensification in production and distribution. *Individual time* would encompass the arrival of small élite groups such as those who may have been responsible for the Arras burials, the social dislocations of c. 350 evident in central southern Britain, the arrival of the Belgic migrants, the impact of the Gallic Wars and the political machinations of the ruling households of the principal tribes.

It would not be particularly easy to render the archaeological data into a discourse of this kind, but the attempt might make it possible to begin to approach the question – what happened in the Iron Age? – a question which, after all, it is not unfair to wish to ask.

And what of the future? There is no lack of new data. Information of all kinds is being recorded at an astonishing rate, partly as the result of rescue excavations and partly from the activities of metal detectorists encouraged to report their finds by the Treasure Act. All this material is essentially anecdotal – that is, it is usually generated by chance rather than as the result of a research strategy. Occasionally chance finds may change whole areas of perceived wisdom but more usually their value is as accumulative data contributing to patterns of distribution. We are fortunate to have such a constant flow of new material but it is no substitute for planned and sustained research.

Recently archaeologists, concerned for the wellbeing of the discipline, produced a document sketching out a list of research desiderata (Haselgrove *et al.* 2001). Valuable exercises of this kind provide a useful focus emphasizing the strengths and weaknesses of our data for those who oversee the distribution of research funds or guide state policies. It is right that we should have long-term aims and objectives and it is to be hoped that funding will become available to enable programmes of the appropriate scale to be set up and maintained. That said, in the short to medium term there is much to be done in properly processing the huge amount of new raw data that is accumulating. We need comprehensive surveys of all kinds of material culture together with detailed integrated studies of regional systems. But perhaps the most pressing research questions are those surrounding issues of mobility and information flow – a theme crucial to our better understanding of British Iron Age society. In our desire to rid ourselves of invasionist models and to embrace new theoretical dictates we have lost sight of the fact that Britain is an island and the sea a highway.

Appendix A

Pottery

In several chapters, particularly 5, 8 and 9 it has been necessary to refer extensively to assemblages of pottery. Pottery is vitally important for the establishment of sequences, for the definition of regional groupings and for throwing some light on the complexities of commercial production and trade. For this reason we illustrate here a representative selection of the major groups. Where vessels have been drawn from the original material, the source is given as ‘author’; when they are drawn from published sources, the publication is cited. Reference to the site list (Appendix C) will, in the case of unpublished material, give the present location of the collections. All drawings are at quarter the original size.

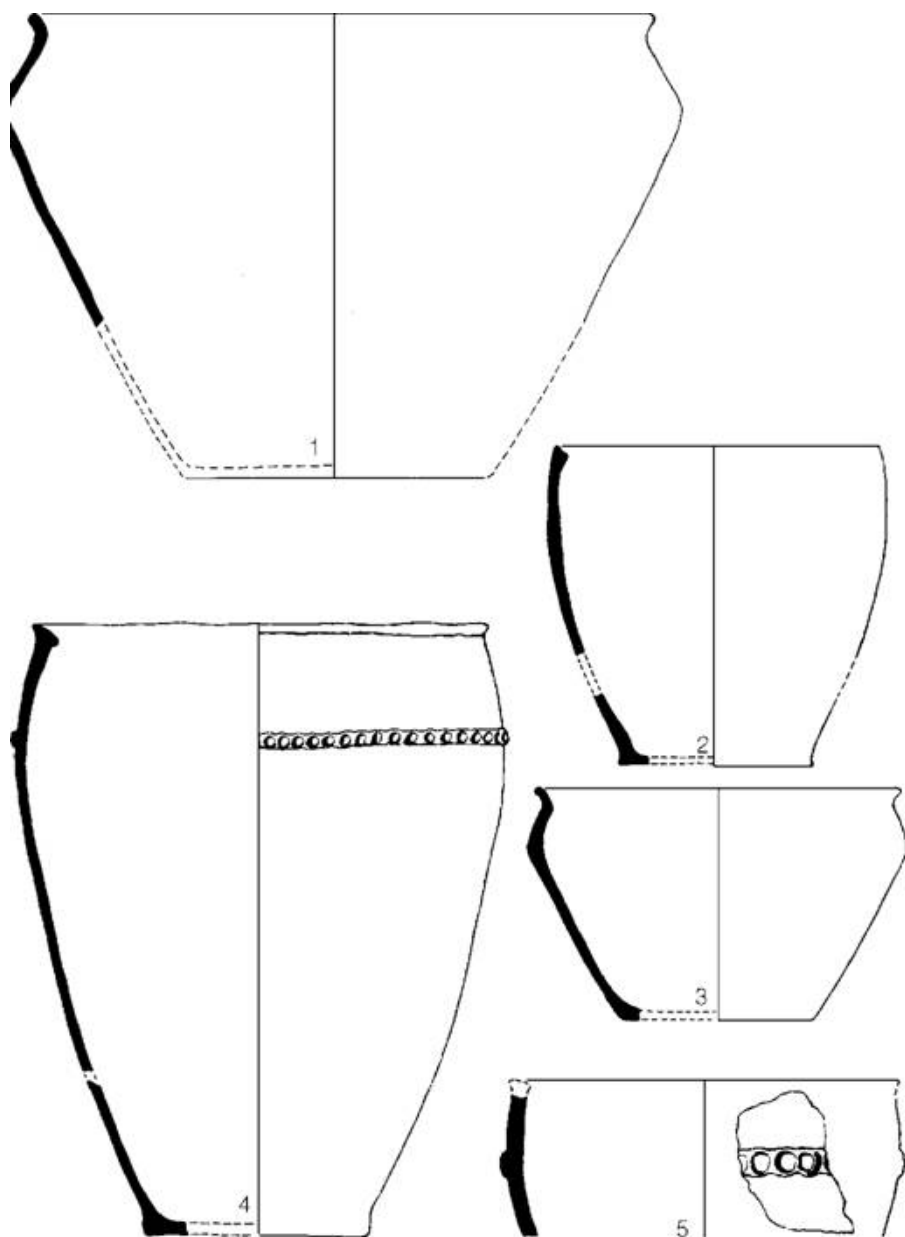


Figure A:1 The Ultimate Deverel–Rimbury tradition: eleventh to ninth centuries. 1–5 Eldon’s Seat (Encombe), Dorset (source: Cunliffe 1968b).

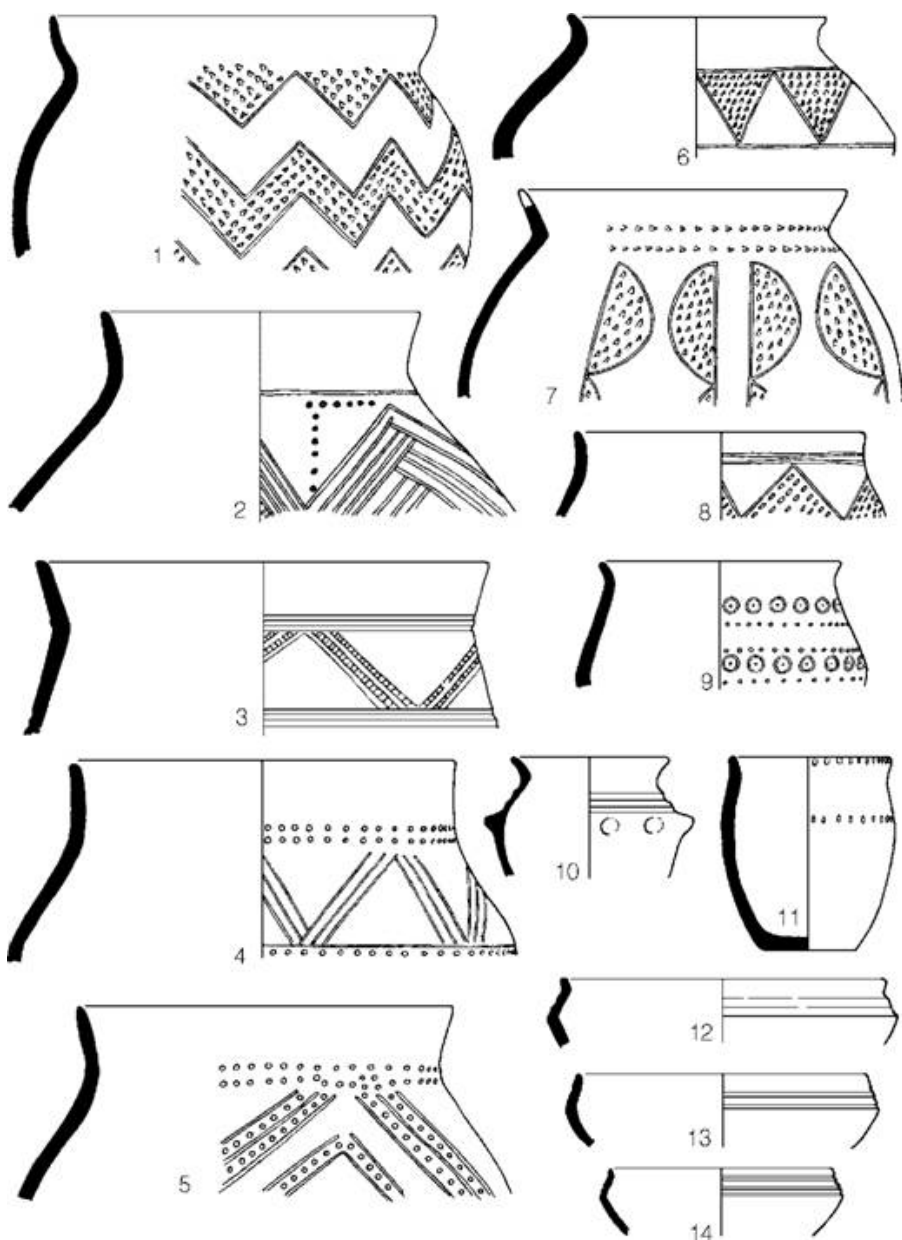


Figure A:2 The Early All Cannings Cross group: ninth to eighth centuries. 1–11 All Cannings Cross, Wilts.; 12–14 Cold Kitchen Hill, Wilts. (source: author).

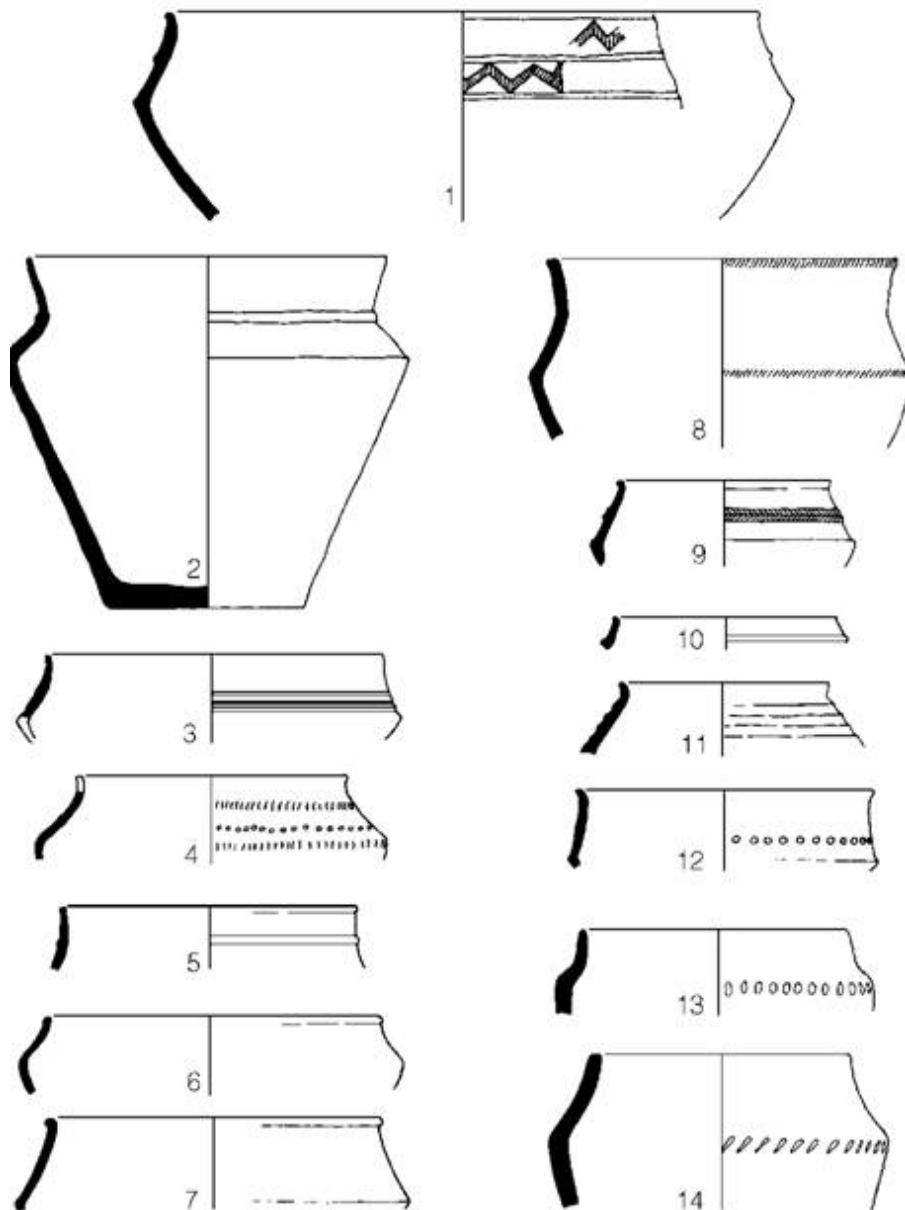


Figure A:3 The Kimmeridge-Caburn group: eighth to seventh centuries. 1-2 the Caburn, Sussex; 3-7 Kimmeridge, Dorset; 8-9 the Caburn, Sussex; 10 Hollingbury Camp, Sussex; 11 Kingston Buci, Sussex; 12-14 Kimmeridge, Dorset (source: author).

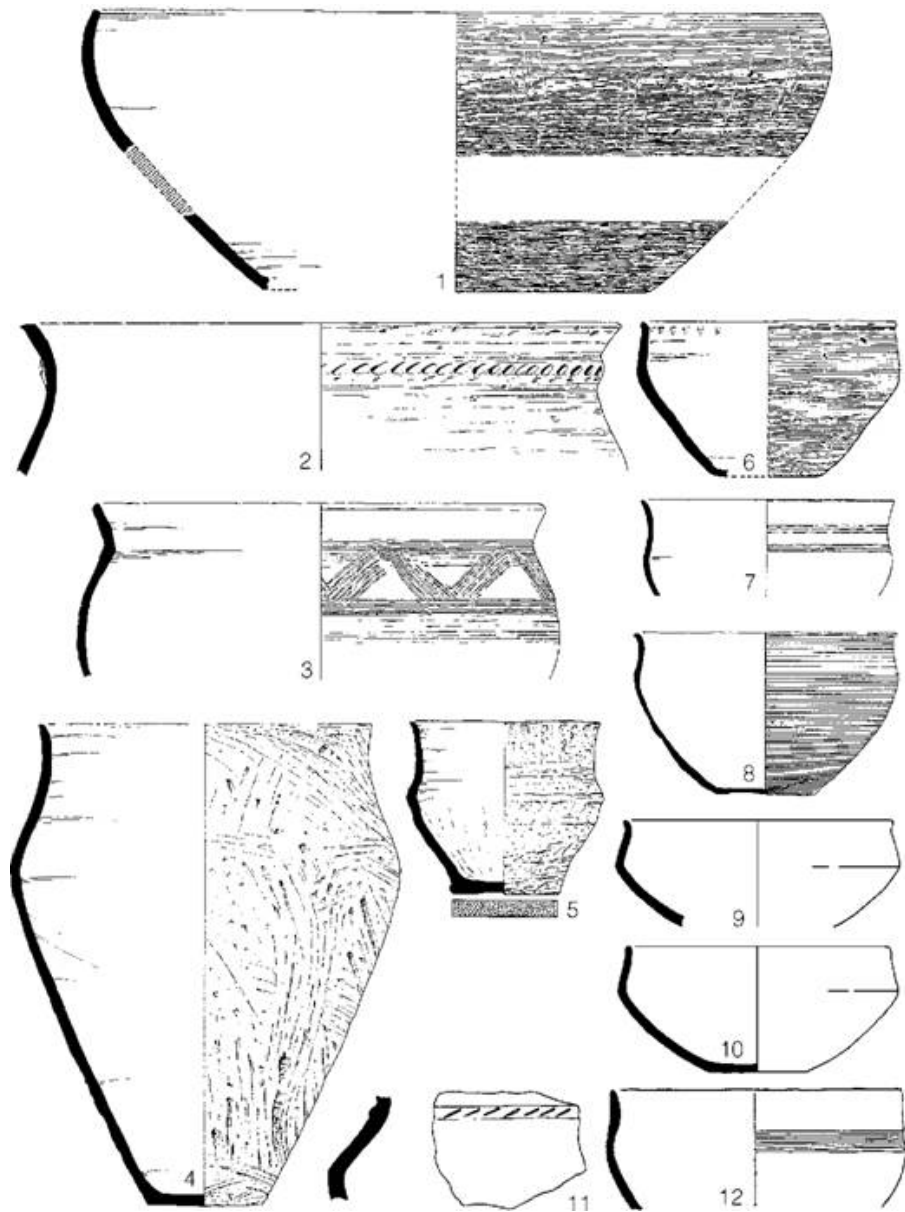


Figure A:4 The Highstead 2 group: eighth to sixth centuries. 1 Monkton Court Farm, Kent; 2–4 High- stead, Chislet, Kent; 5 Cobham Golf Course, Rochester, Kent; 6–7 Monkton Court Farm, Kent; 8 Highstead, Chislet, Kent; 9–11 Minnis Bay, Kent; 12 Highstead, Chislet, Kent (sources: 1–8 and 12 original drawings by Nigel Macpherson-Grant; 9–11 author).

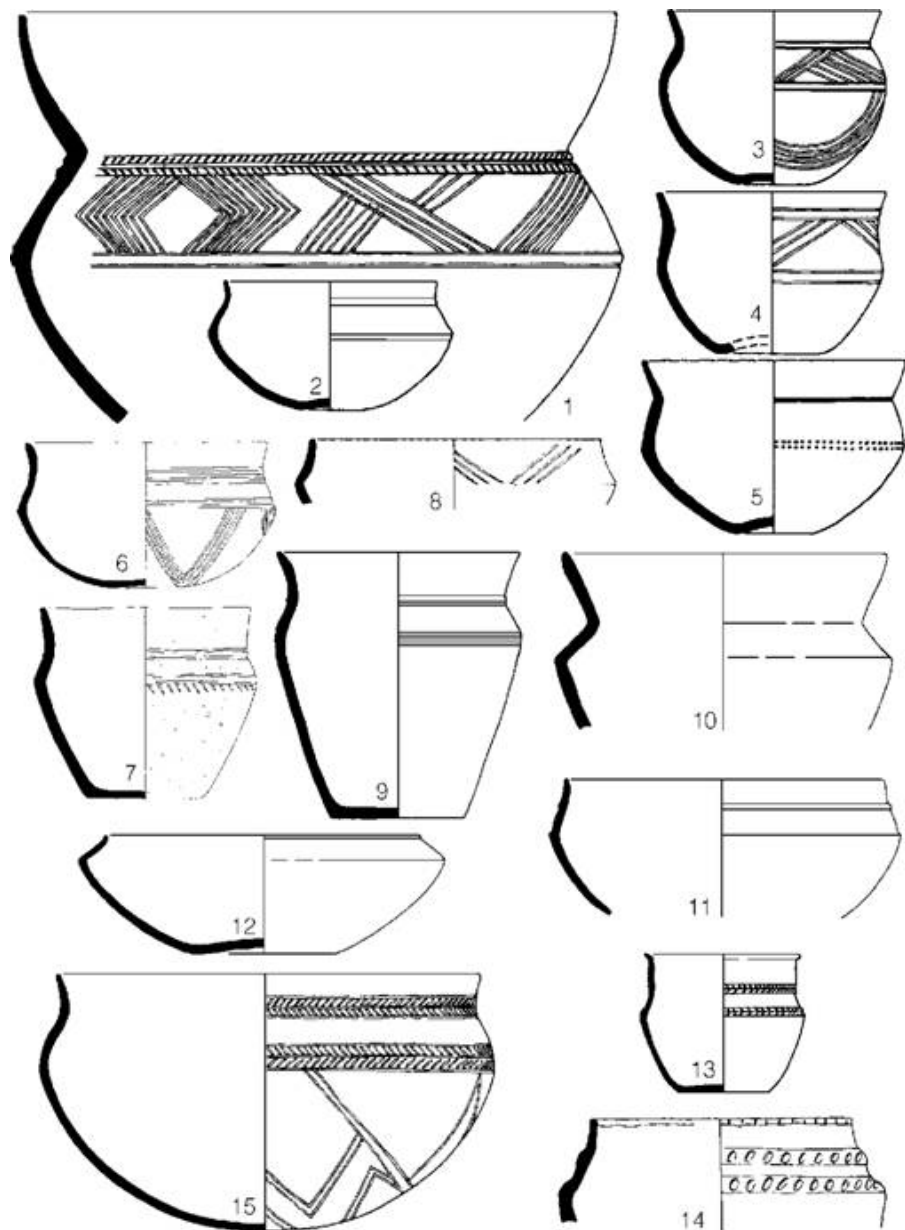


Figure A:5 The West Harling–Fengate group: eighth to sixth centuries. 1–5 Fengate, Northants; 6–7 Little Bealings, Norfolk; 8 West Harling, Norfolk; 9 Creeping St Mary, Suffolk; 10–12 West Harling, Norfolk; 13 Buntley, Suffolk; 14 West Harling, Norfolk; 15 Cromer, Norfolk (sources: 6–7 Martin 1993; rest author).

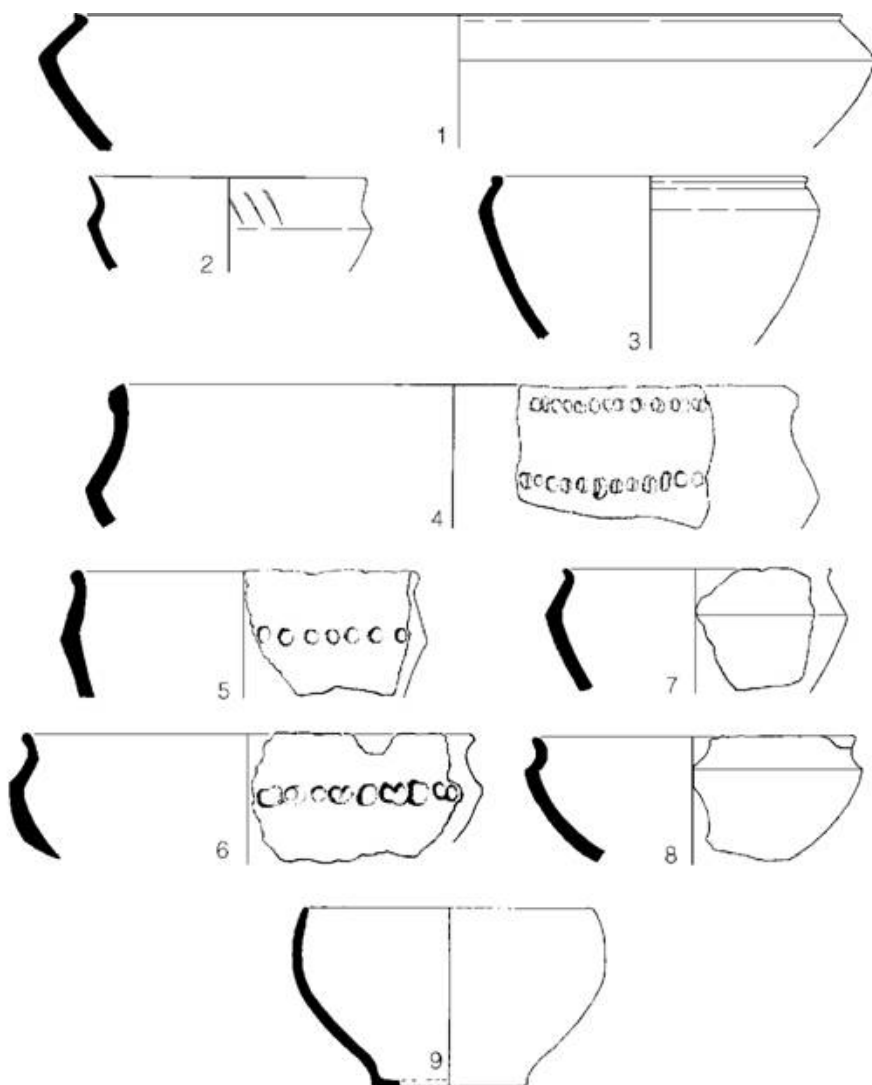


Figure A:6 *The Staple Howe group: eighth to sixth centuries. 1–9 Staple Howe, Yorks. (source: Brewster 1963).*

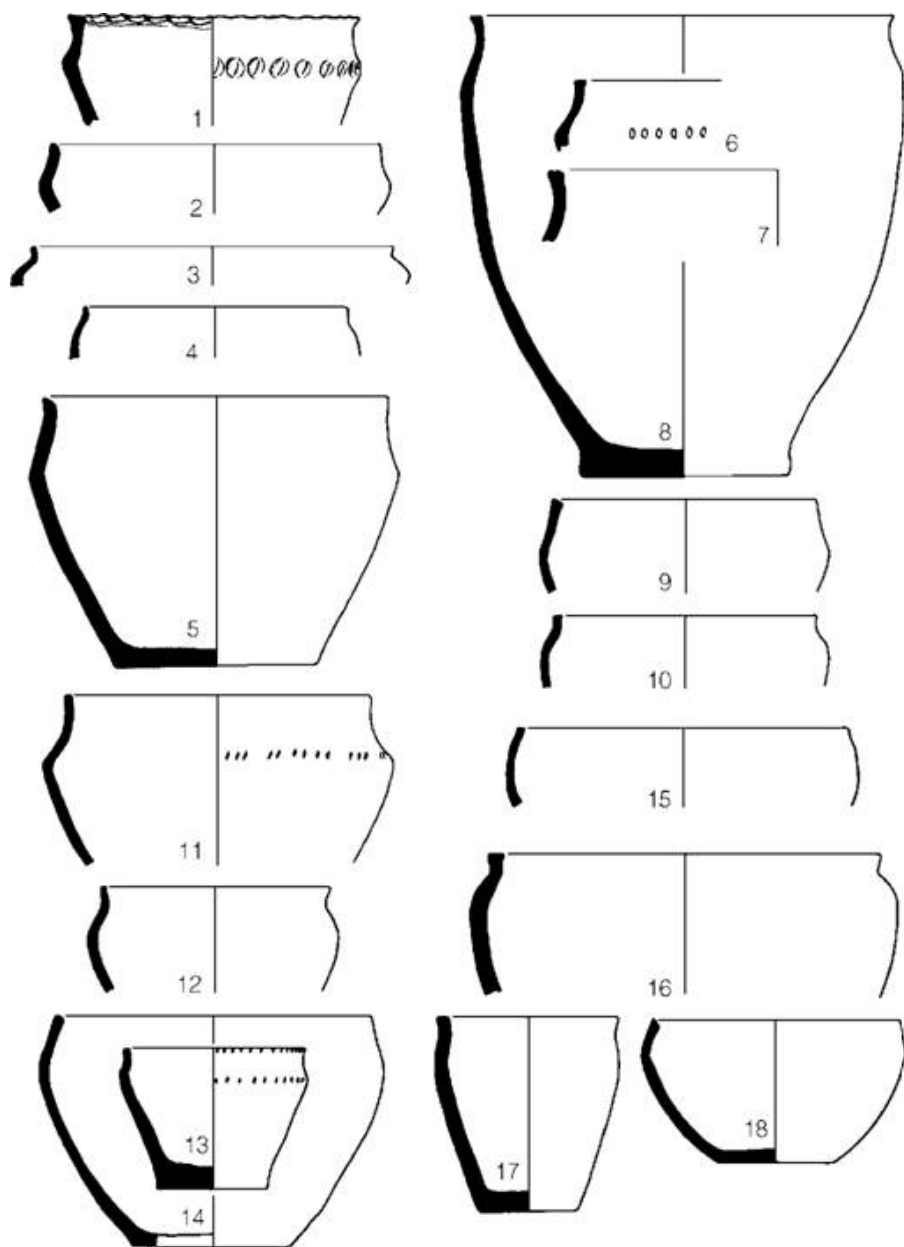


Figure A:7 *The Ivinghoe-Sandy group: eighth to sixth centuries. 1–4 Sandy, Beds.; 5 Chippenham, Cambs.; 6–8 Sandy, Beds.; 9–10 Green End Road, Cambs.; 11 Grantchester, Cambs.; 12–14 Kempston, Foster’s Pit, Beds.; 15 Totternhoe, Beds.; 16–18 Harrold, Beds. (source: author).*

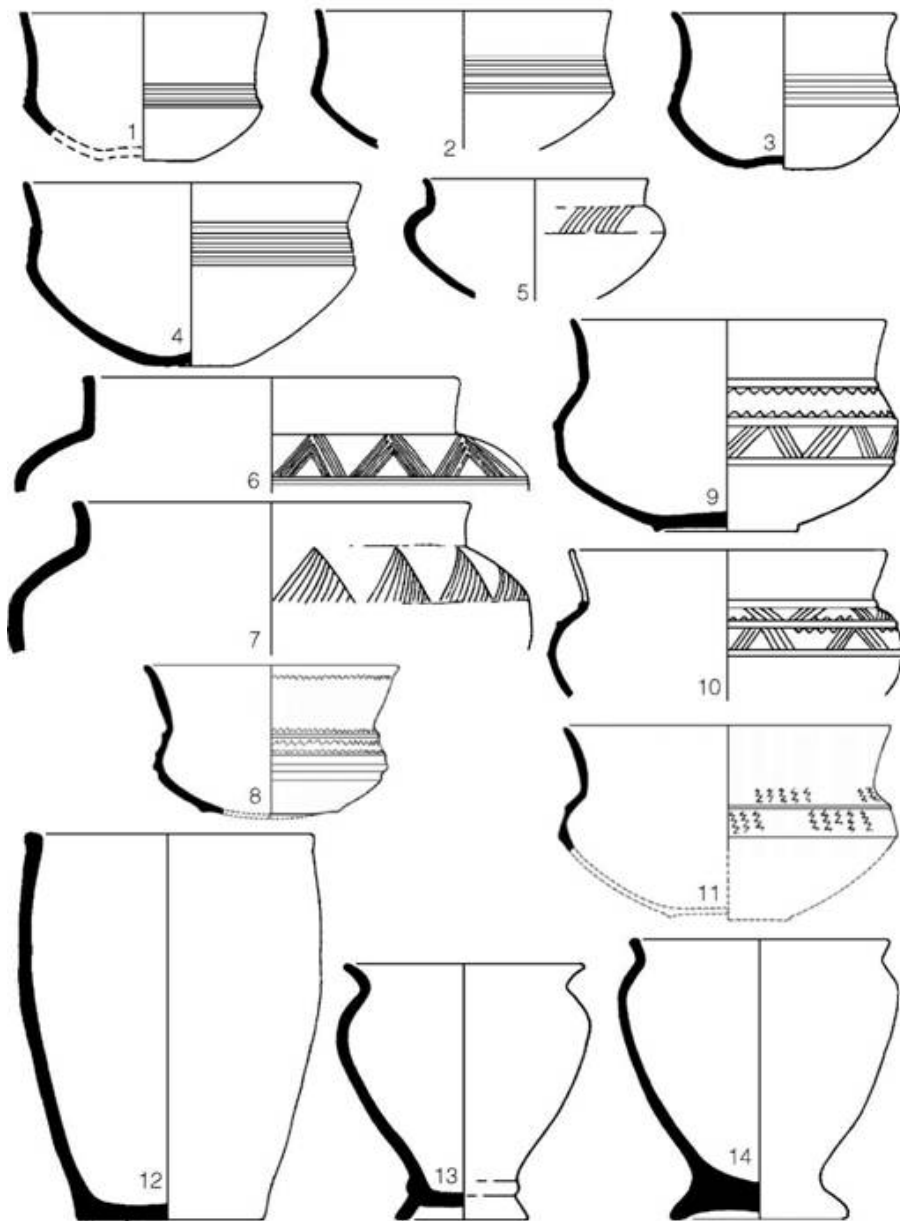


Figure A:8 The All Cannings Cross–Meon Hill group: fifth to third centuries. 1 Winchester, Hants; 2 Boscombe Down West, Wilts.; 3–4 All Cannings Cross, Wilts.; 5 Boscombe Down West, Wilts.; 6 All Cannings Cross, Wilts.; 7–8 Boscombe Down West, Wilts.; 9 Danebury, Hants; 10 All Cannings Cross, Wilts.; 11 Meon Hill, Hants; 12 Danebury, Hants; 13 Boscombe Down West, Wilts.; 14 Swallowcliffe, Wilts. (source: author).

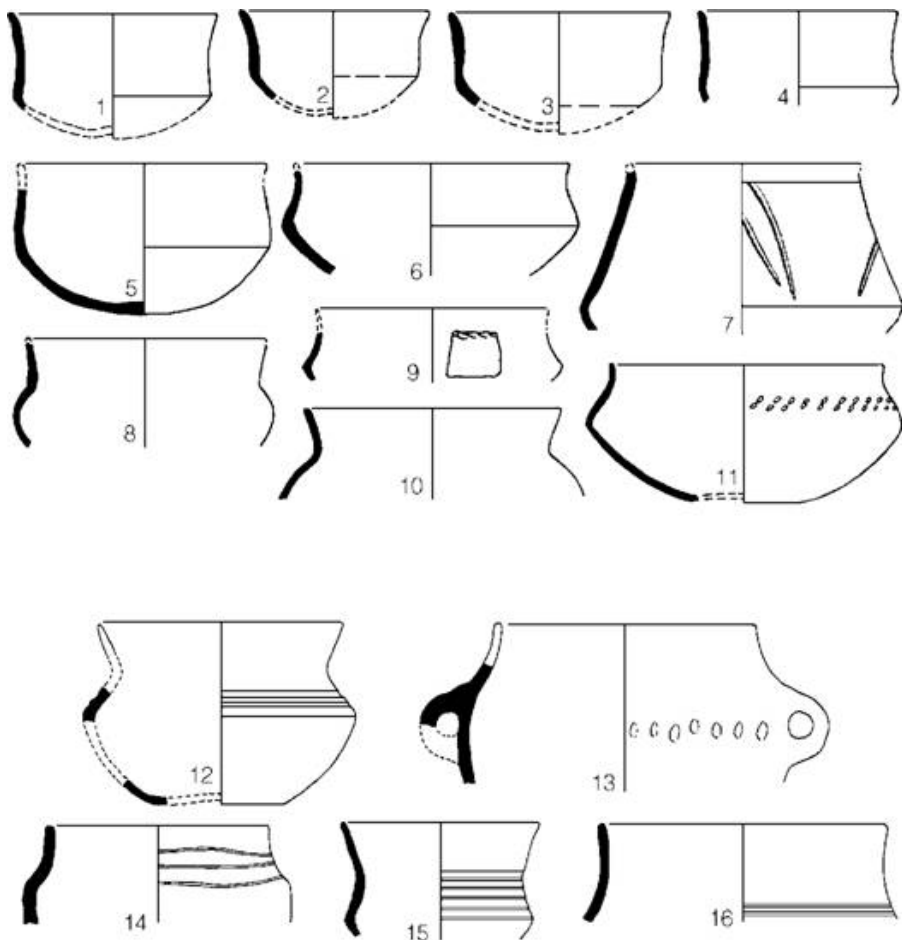


Figure A:9 Dorset and Somerset variants of the All Cannings Cross–Meon Hill group: fifth to third centuries. 1–11 Eldon’s Seat, Dorset; 12–13 Pagan’s Hill, Somerset; 14–16 Bathampton Down, Somerset (sources: 1–11 Cunliffe 1968b; 12–16 author).

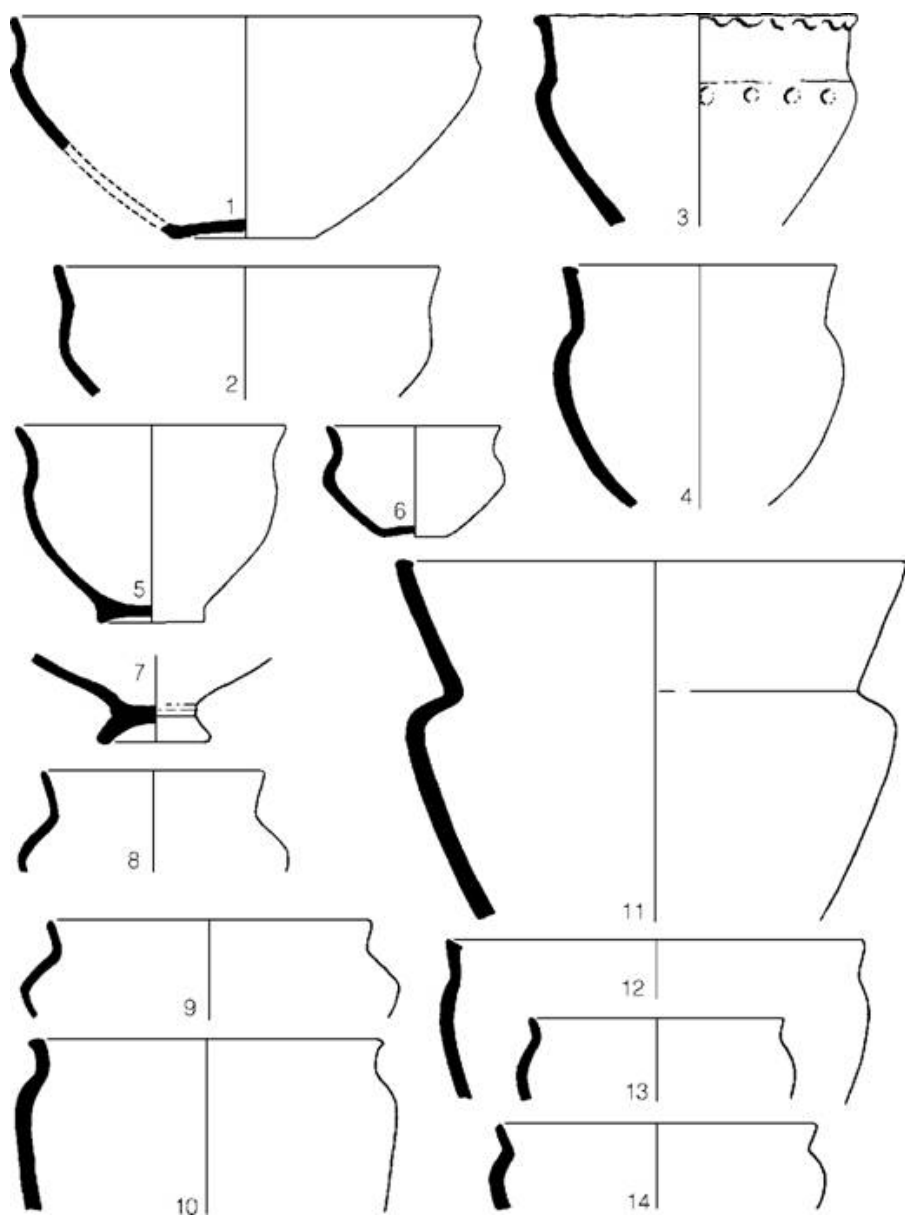


Figure A:10 The Park Brow–Caesar’s Camp group: fifth to third centuries.
 1 St Catharine’s Hill, Guild- ford, Surrey; 2–3 Caesar’s Camp
 (Wimbledon), Surrey; 4 St Martha’s Hill, Surrey; 5 Chertsey, Surrey; 6 St
 George’s Hill (Weybridge), Surrey; 7–13 Park Brow, Sussex; 14 Muntham
 Court, Sussex (source: author).

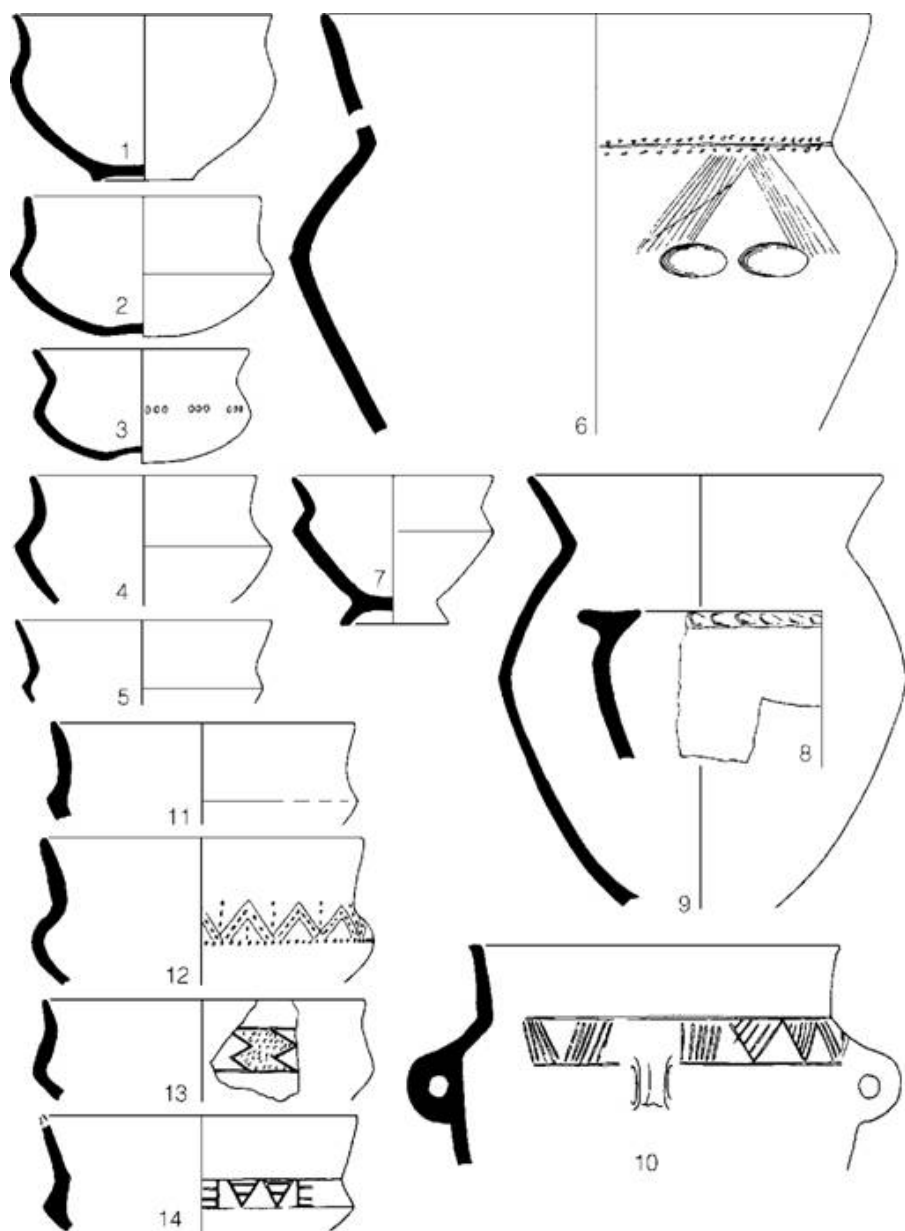


Figure A:11 The Long Wittenham–Allen’s Pit group: fifth to third centuries. 1 Chinnor, Oxon.; 2–5 Long Wittenham, Oxon.; 6 Allen’s Pit, Oxon.; 7 Chinnor, Oxon.; 8 Mount Farm, Oxon.; 9 Long Wittenham, Oxon.; 10 Allen’s Pit, Oxon.; 11 Mount Farm, Oxon.; 12 Dennis Pit, Old Marden, Oxon.; 13 Bampton, Oxon.; 14 Witham, Berks. (source: author).

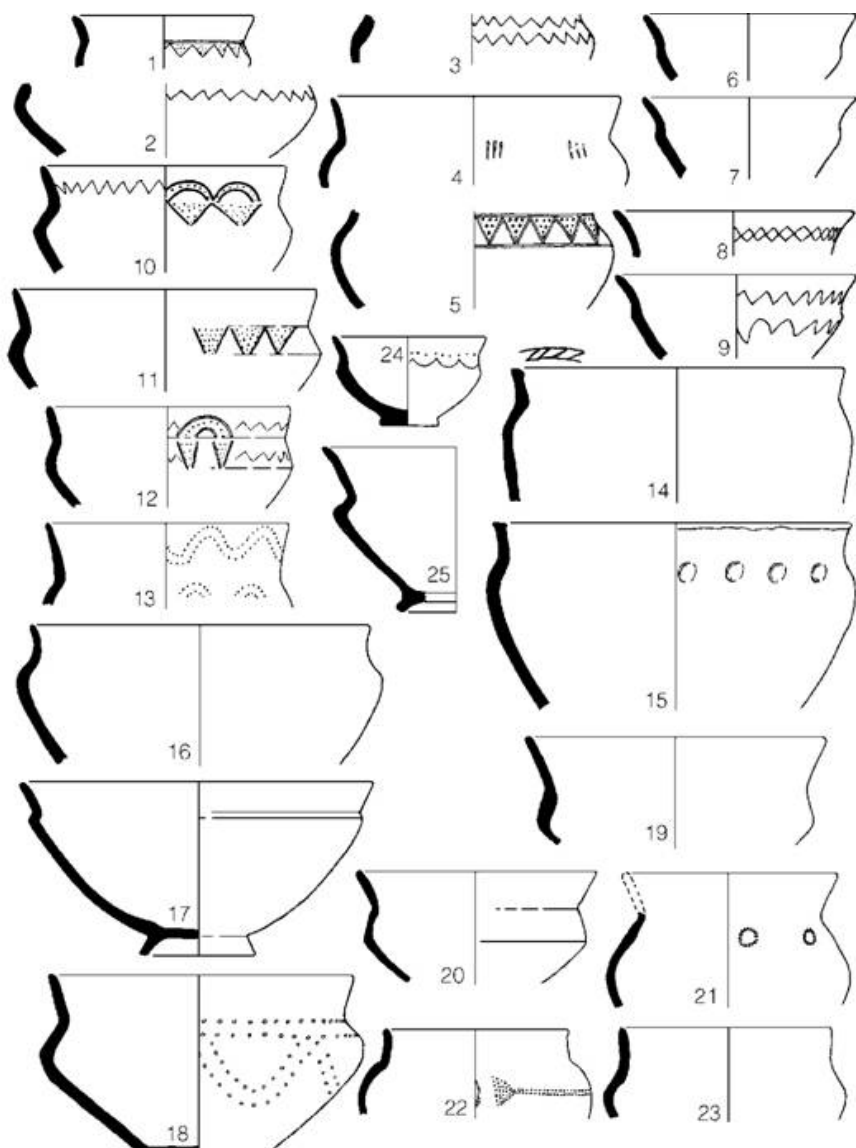


Figure A:12 The Chinnor–Wandlebury group: fifth to third centuries. 1–2 Bledlow, Bucks.; 3–5 Ellesborough, Bucks.; 6–9 Great Wymondley, Herts.; 10–13 Chinnor, Oxon.; 14 Great Wymondley, Herts.; 15 Chinnor, Oxon.; 16–17 Wandlebury, Cambs.; 18 Abington Pigotts, Cambs.; 19–23 Blewburton, Berks.; 24 Chinnor, Oxon.; 25 Mortlake, Middlesex (source: author).

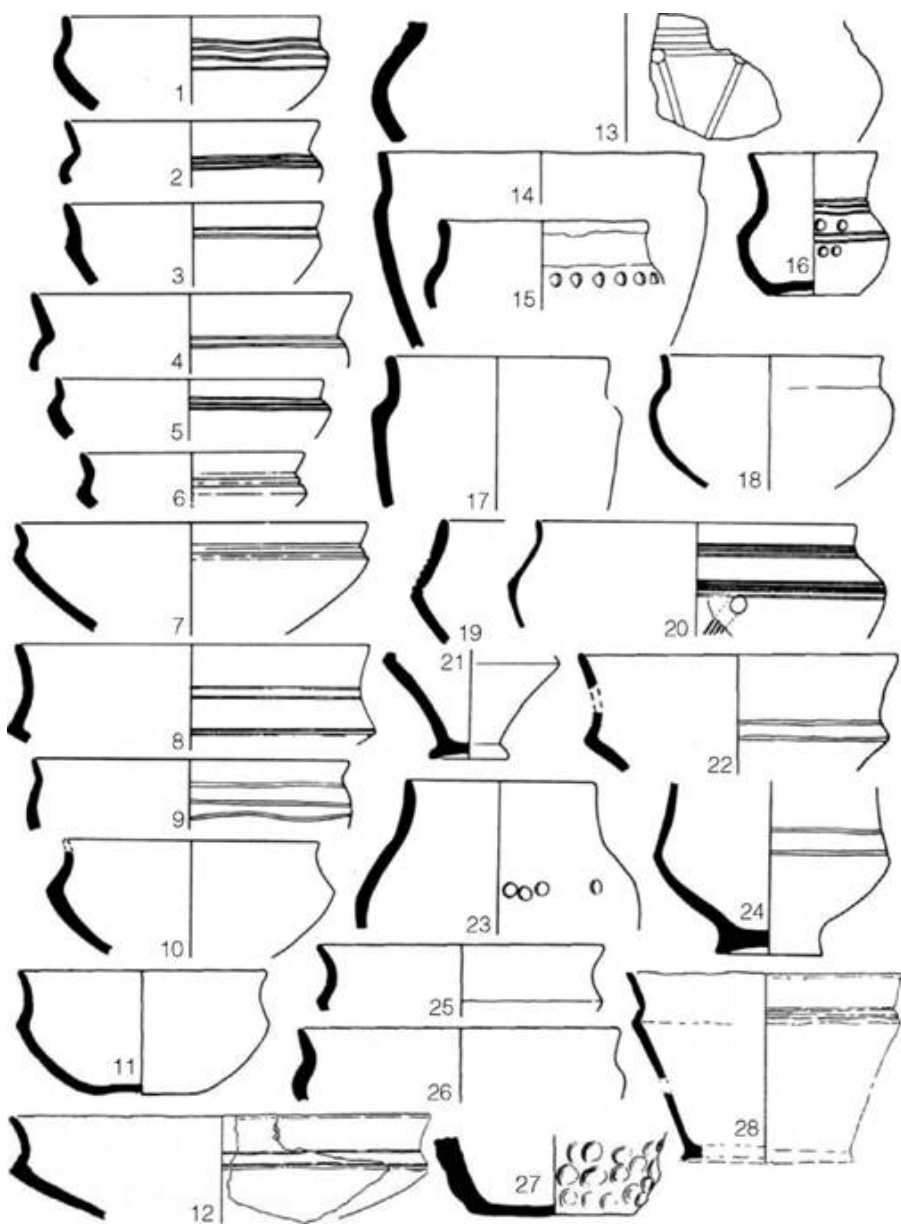


Figure A:13 The Darmsden-Linton group: fifth to third centuries. 1–5 Darmsden, Suffolk; 6–7 Linton, Cambs.; 8 Leigh Hill, Cobham, Surrey; 9 Linton, Cambs.; 10 Feltwell, Norfolk; 11 Leigh Hill, Cobham, Surrey; 12 Romford, Essex; 13–14 Darmsden, Suffolk; 15 Hawk’s Hill, Surrey; 16 Esher, Surrey; 17–18 Linton, Cambs.; 19–20 Hinderclay, Suffolk; 21 Linton, Cambs.; 22 Hinderclay, Suffolk; 23 Linton, Cambs.; 24 Feltwell, Norfolk; 25–6 Hawk’s Hill, Surrey; 27 Linton, Cambs.; 28 Romford, Essex (sources: 12 and 28 Greenwood 1996; rest author).

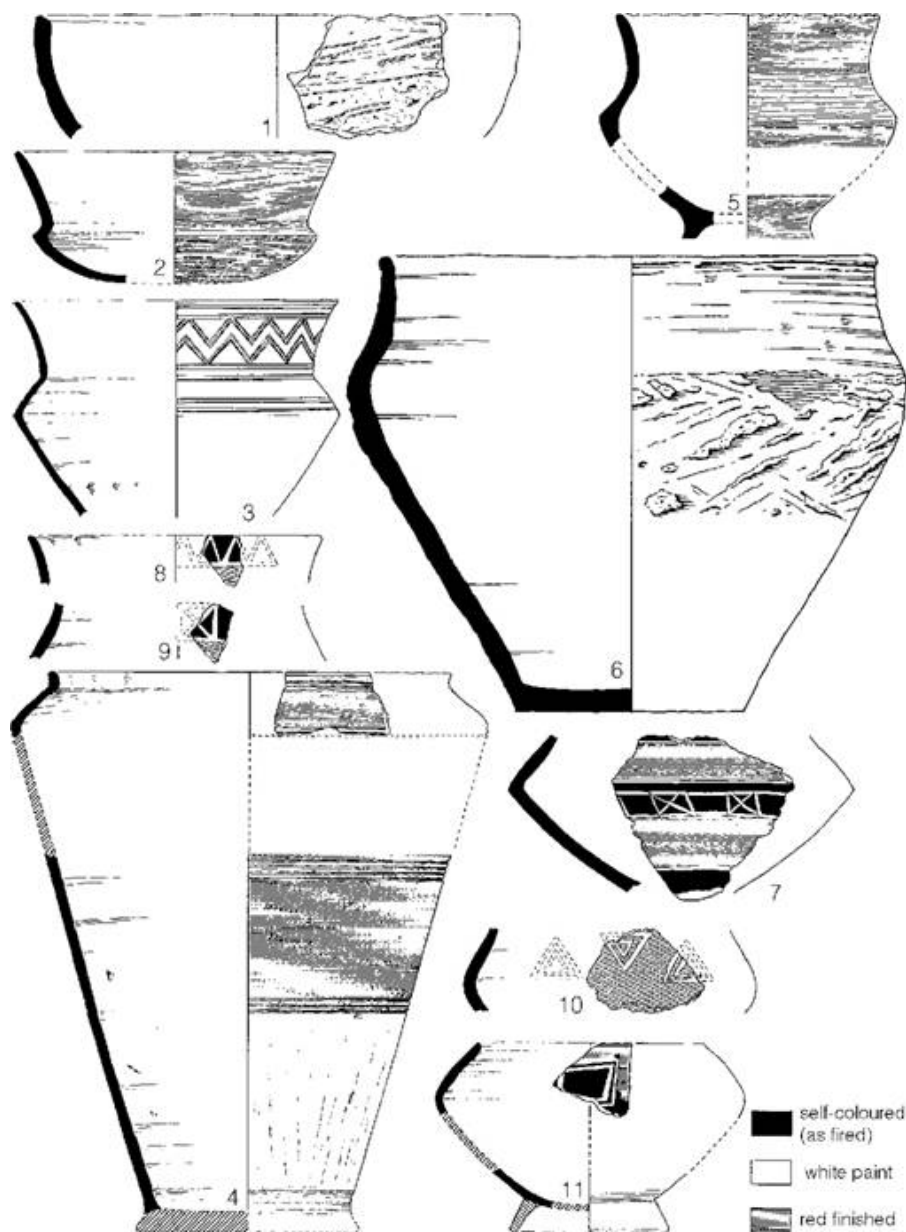


Figure A:14 The Highstead–Dollands Moor group: fifth to third centuries. 1 Highstead, Chislet, Kent; 2 Dollands Moor, Folkestone, Kent; 3 Castle Hill, Folkestone, Kent; 4 Whitfield, Dover, Kent; 5–7 Highstead, Chislet, Kent; 8–10 Sarre, Thanet, Kent; 11 Castle Hill, Folkestone, Kent (source: original drawings by Nigel Macpherson-Grant).

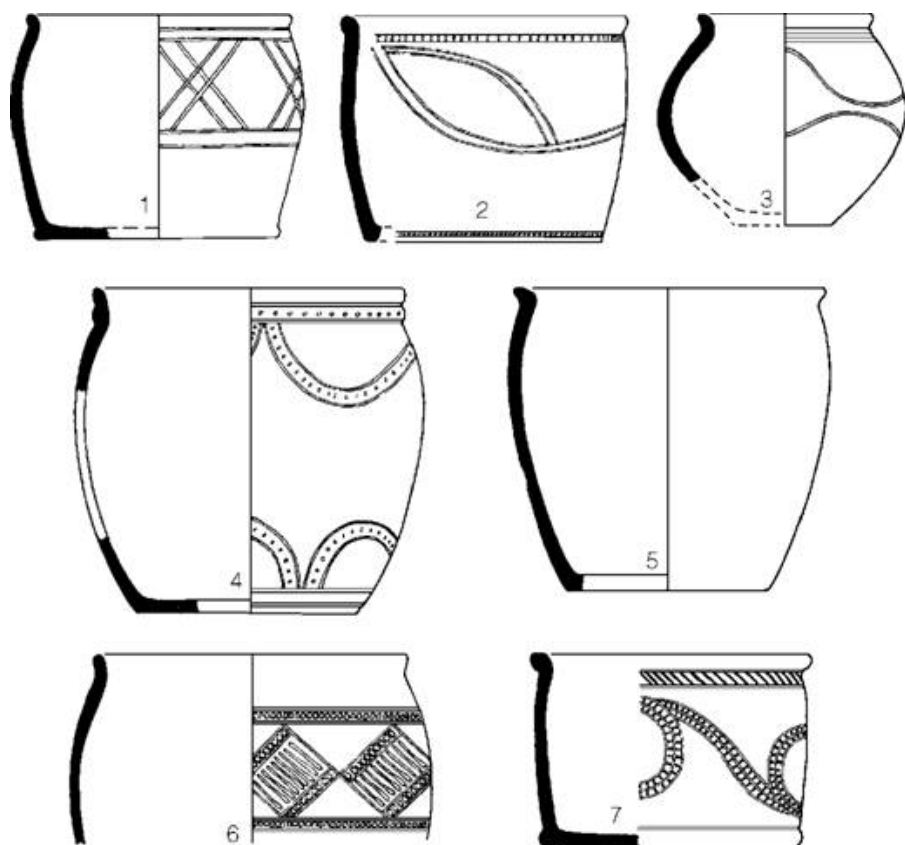


Figure A:15 The Caburn–Cissbury style: third to first centuries. 1 Cissbury, Sussex; 2 Elm Grove, Brighton, Sussex; 3 Cissbury, Sussex; 4–5 Park Brow, Sussex; 6 Newhaven, Sussex; 7 the Caburn, Sussex (source: author).

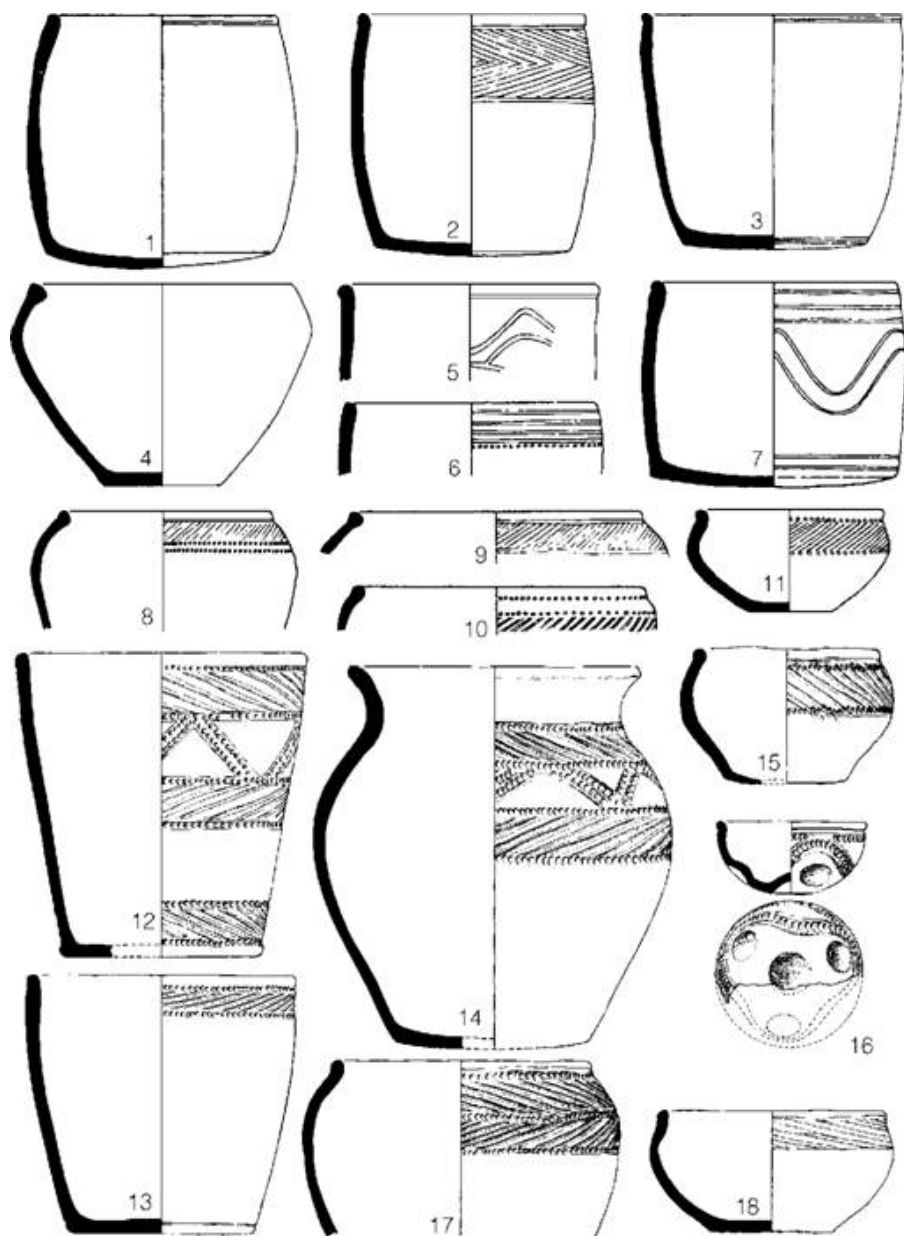


Figure A:16 *The St Catharine's Hill–Worthy Down style: third to first centuries. 1 Twyford Down, Hants; 2–4 St Catharine's Hill, Hants; 5–6 Twyford Down, Hants; 7 the Trundle, Sussex; 8–11 Worthy Down, Hants; 12–18 Danebury, Hants (source: author).*

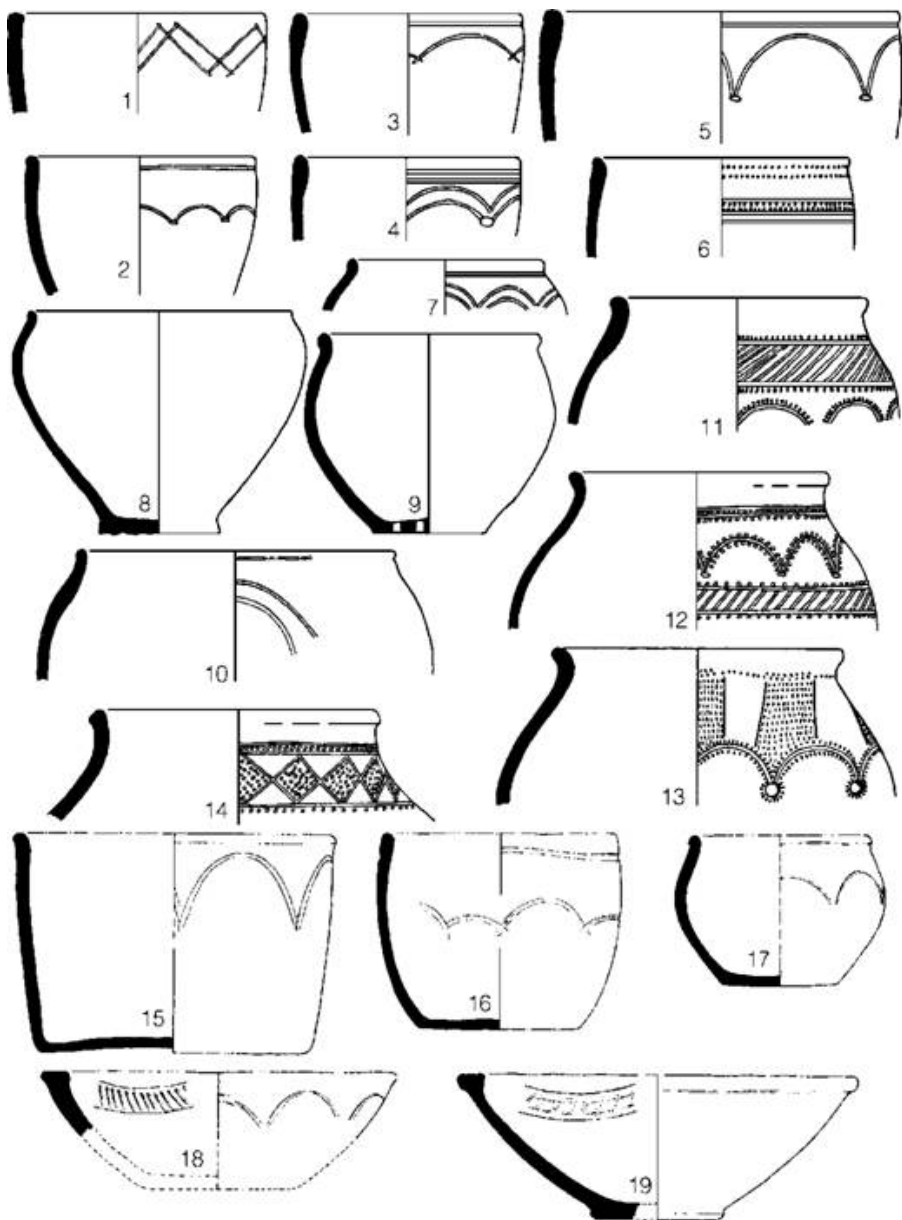


Figure A:17 *The Yarnbury–Highfield style: third to first centuries. 1 Yarnbury, Wilts.; 2 Highfield, Wilts.; 3–4 Yarnbury, Wilts.; 5 Fifield Bavant, Wilts.; 6 Yarnbury, Wilts.; 7 Highfield, Wilts.; 8–10 Fifield Bavant, Wilts.; 11 Yarnbury, Wilts.; 12 Highfield, Wilts.; 13–14 Yarnbury, Wilts.; 15–19 Danebury, Hants (source: author).*

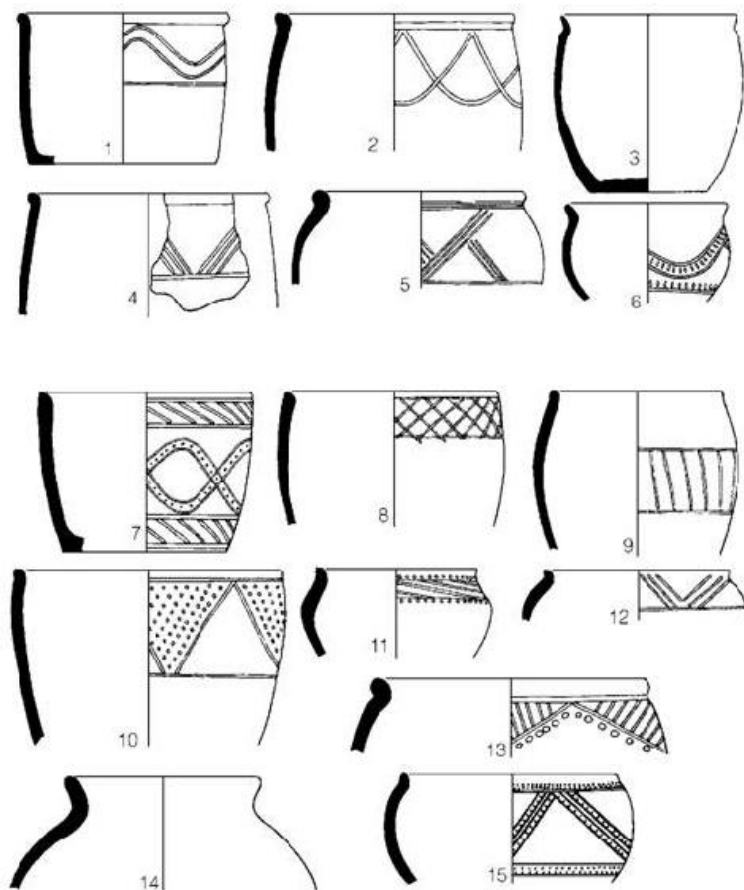


Figure A:18 The Hawk's Hill–West Clandon style (nos. 1–6) and the Southcote– Blewburton style (nos. 7–15): both third to first centuries. 1 Hawk's Hill, Surrey; 2, 3 West Clandon, Surrey; 4 Hawk's Hill, Surrey; 5 West Clandon, Surrey; 6 Hawk's Hill, Surrey; 7–9 Blewburton Hill, Oxon.; 10 Knighton Hill, Berks.; 11–12 Theale, Berks.; 13–14 Southcote, Berks.; 15 Blewburton Hill, Oxon. (source: author).

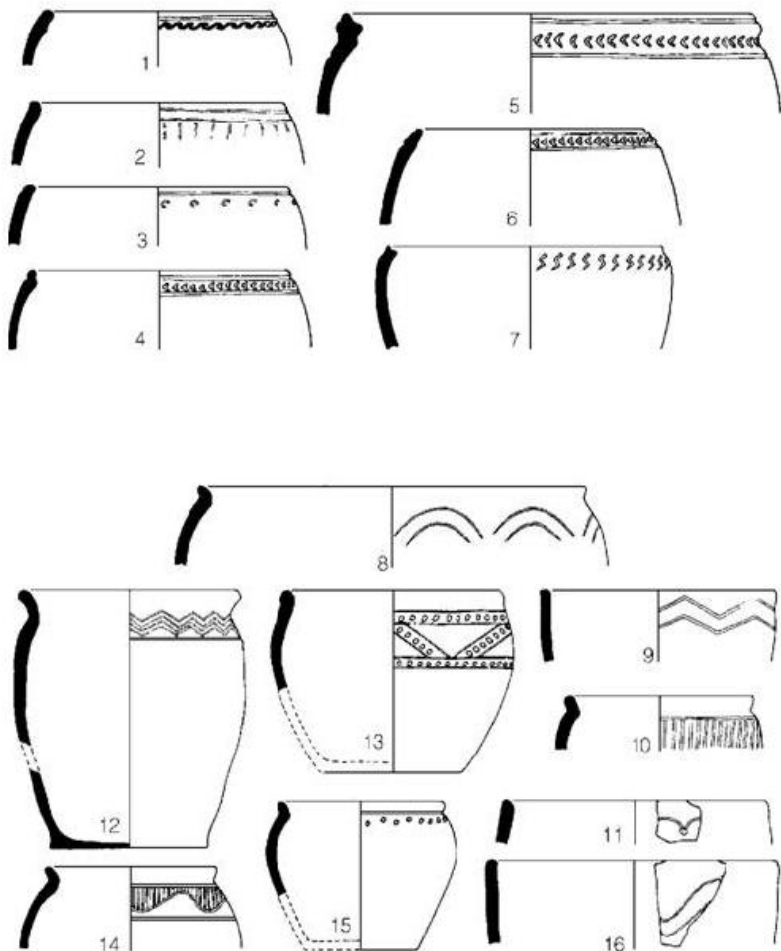


Figure A:19 *The Croft Ambrey–Bredon Hill style (nos. 1–7): fifth/fourth to first centuries; the Lydney– Llanmelin style (nos. 8–16): third to first centuries. 1–6 Sutton Walls, Heref.; 7 Cleeve Hill, Glos.; 8 Lydney, Glos.; 9 Llanmelin, Mon.; 10 Lydney, Glos.; 11–12 Llanmelin, Mon.; 13–15 Lydney, Glos.; 16 Llanmelin, Mon. (source: author).*

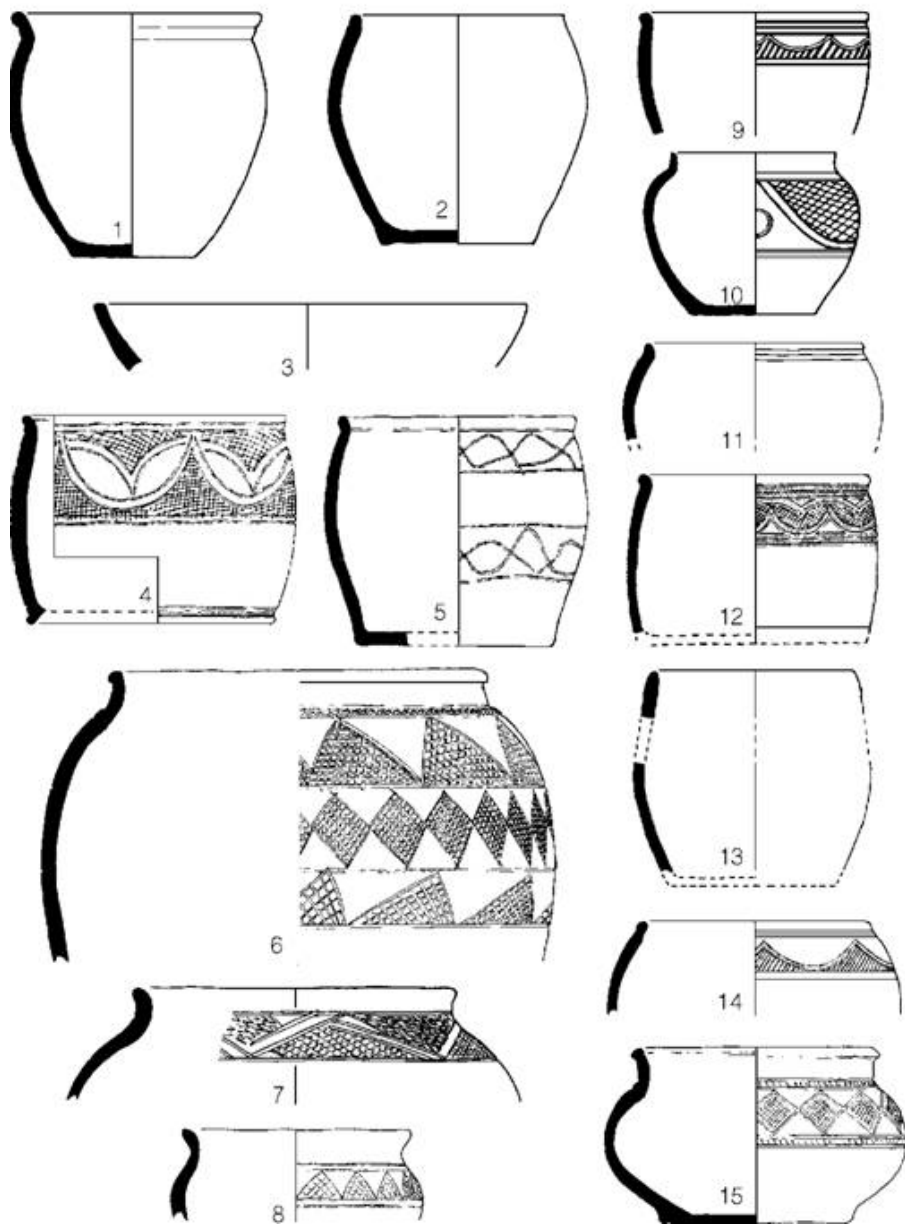


Figure A:20 The Glastonbury–Blaise Castle Hill style: third to first centuries. 1–2 Worlebury, Somerset; 3 Blaise Castle, Glos.; 4–5 Westonzoyland, Somerset; 6–8 Meare East, Somerset; 9–10 Read’s Cavern, Somerset; 11–12 Westonzoyland, Somerset; 13 Alstone, Somerset; 14–15 Meare East, Somerset (sources: 4–5 and 11–13 Miles and Miles 1969; 6–8 and 14–15 Coles 1987; rest author).

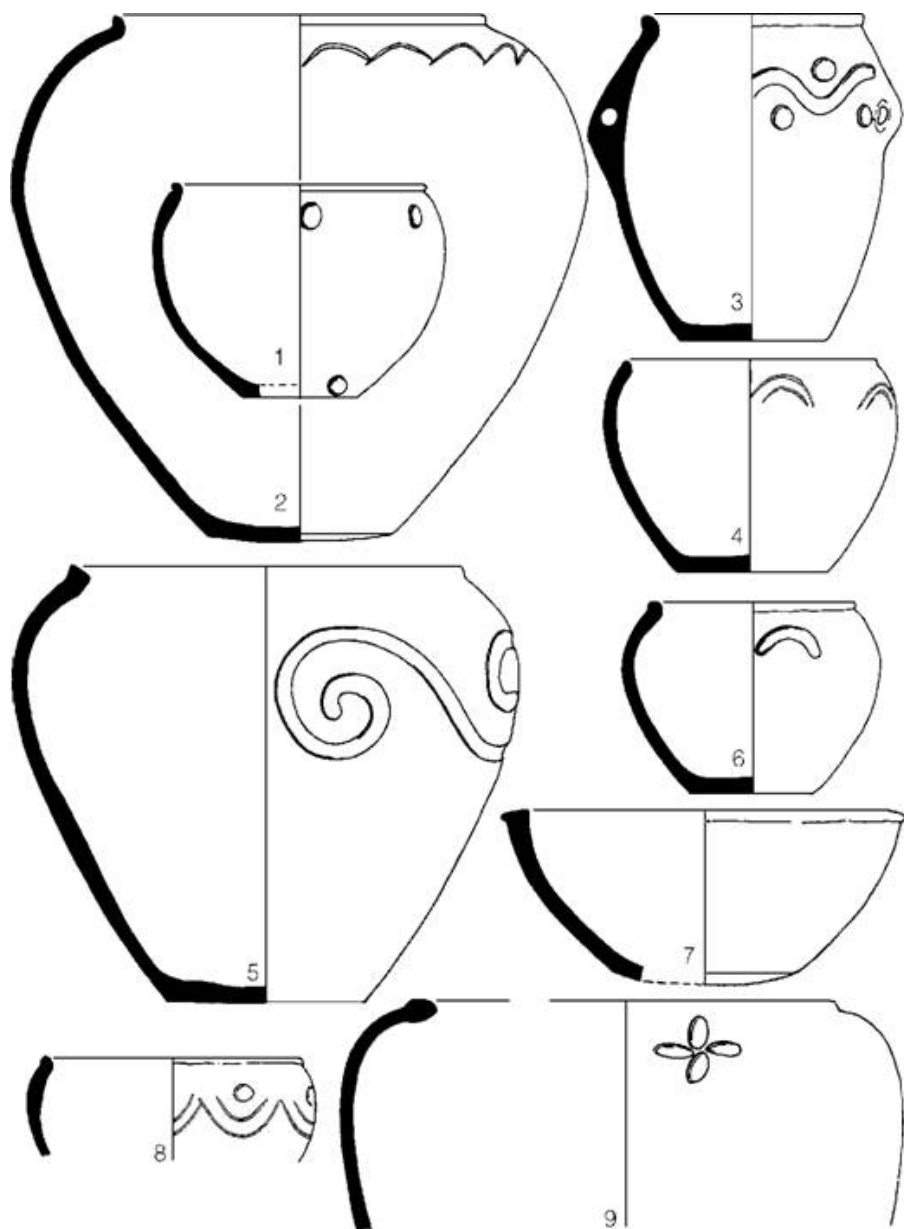


Figure A:21 The Maiden Castle–Marnhull style: third to first centuries. 1–9 Maiden Castle, Dorset (source: author).

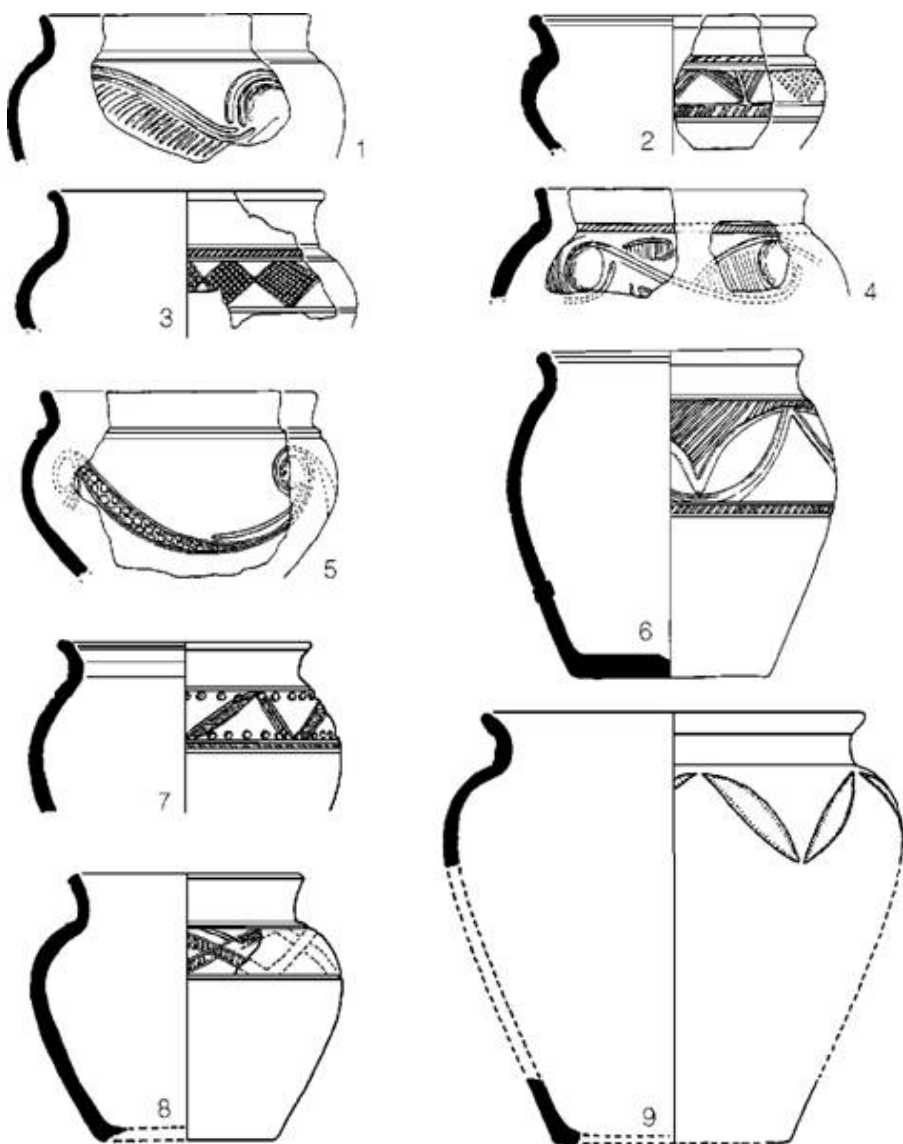


Figure A:22 Glastonbury ware types (group 1): ?second century BC. 1 Castle Dore, Cornwall; 2–3 Carloggas Camp, St Mawgan-in-Pydar, Cornwall; 4–5 Castle Dore, Cornwall; 6–8 Carloggas Camp, St Mawgan-in-Pydar, Cornwall; 9 Treveneague fogou, Cornwall (sources: Castle Dore, Radford 1951; Carloggas Camp, Threipland 1957; Treveneague fogou, Peacock 1969, figure 3).

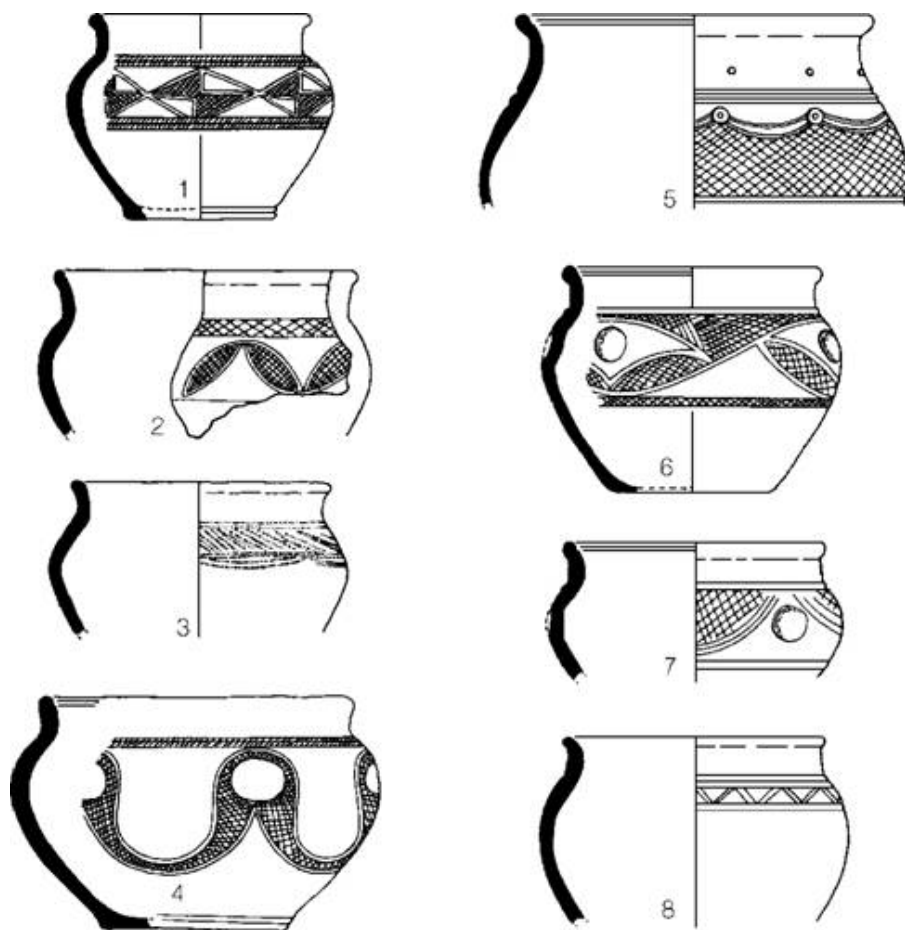


Figure A:23 Glastonbury ware types (group 2): first century BC to first century AD. 1–2 Glastonbury, Somerset; 3 Wookey Hole, Somerset; 4 Meare, Somerset; 5–8 Glastonbury, Somerset (sources: Glastonbury, Bulleid and Gray 1917; Meare, Bulleid and Gray 1948; Wookey Hole, Peacock 1969).

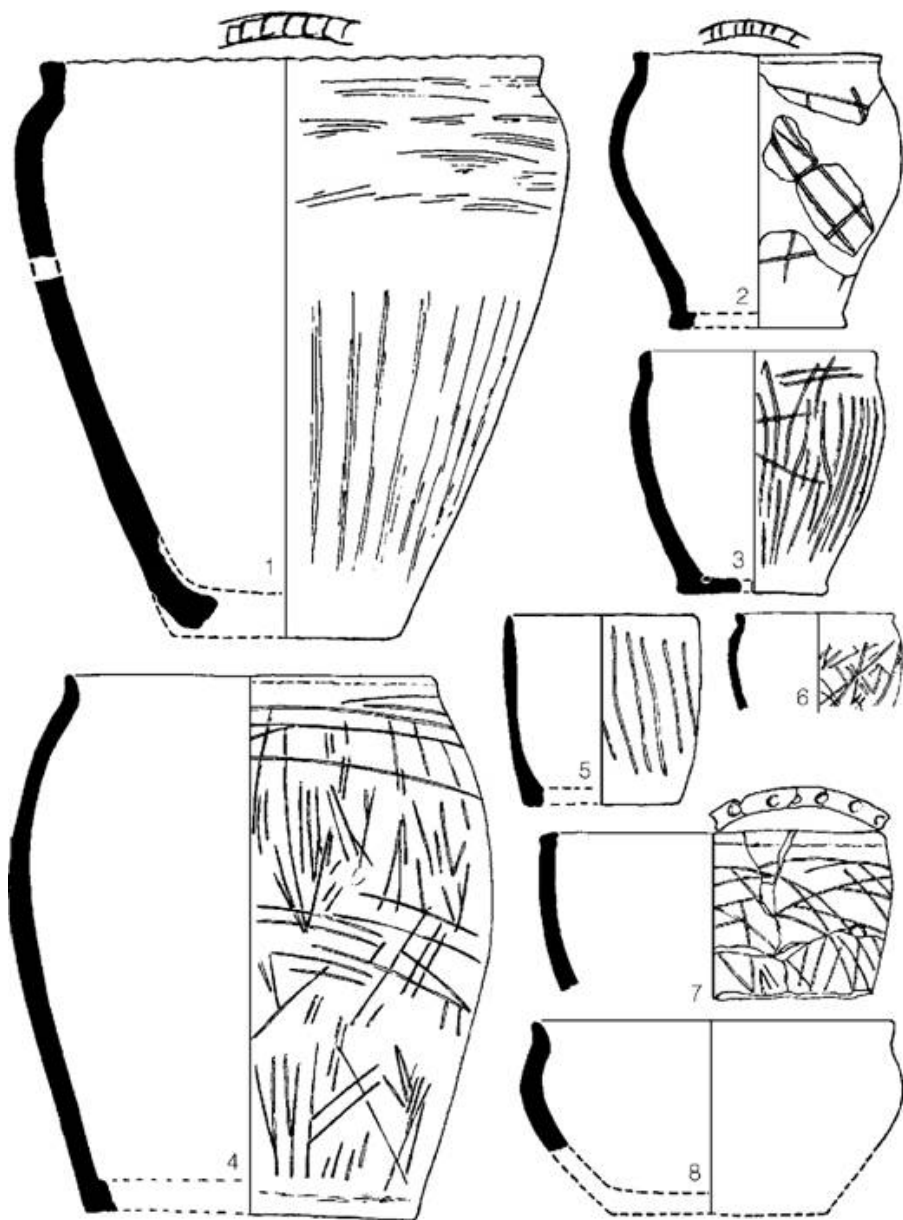


Figure A:24 The Breedon-Ancaster group: ?fifth to first centuries. 1–3 Breedon-on-the-Hill, Leics.; 4 Holme Pierrepont, Notts.; 5 Ancaster Quarry, Lincs.; 6 Wakeley, Northants; 7 Ancaster Quarry, Lincs.; 8 Breedon-on-the-Hill, Leics. (sources: 1–3, 8 Kenyon 1950; 4–7 Elsdon 1992).

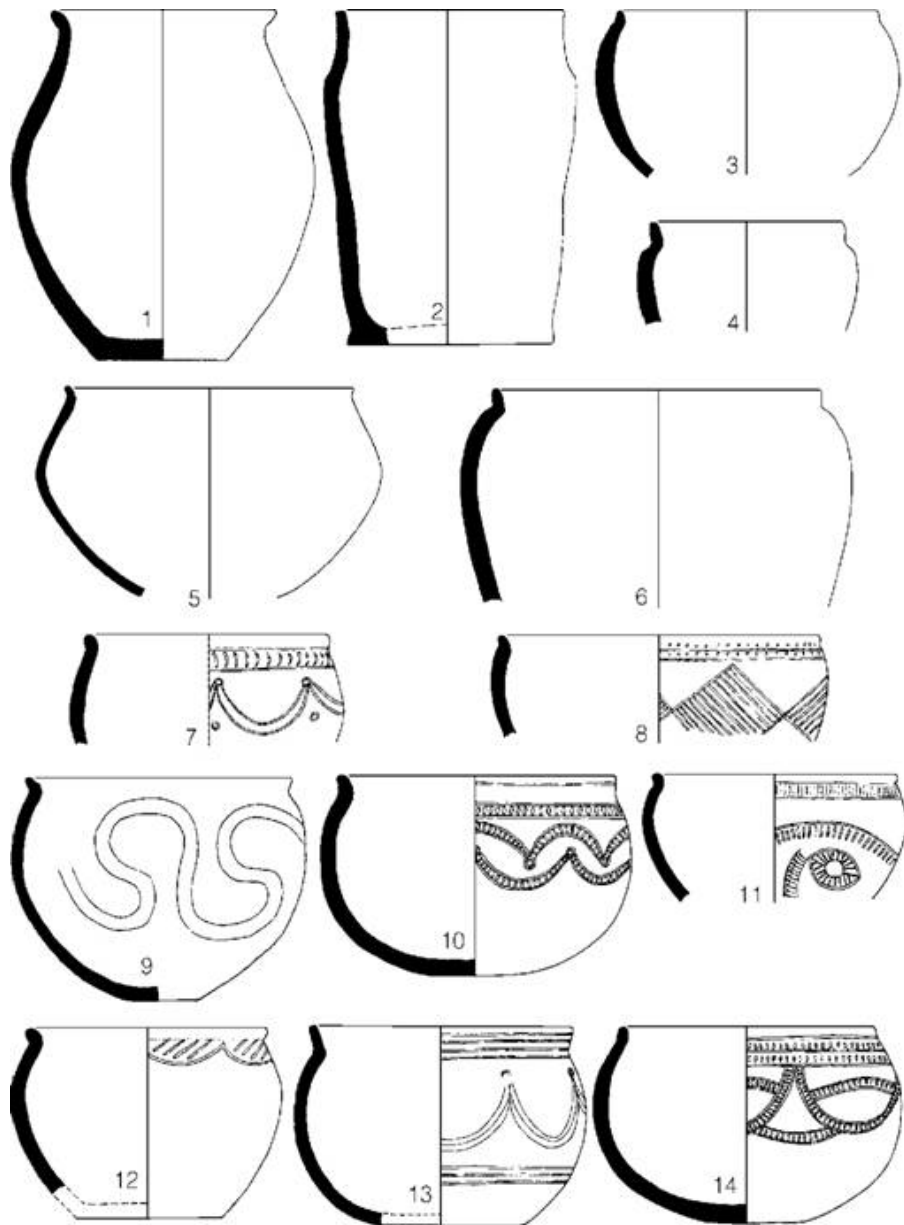


Figure A:25 The Stanton Harcourt-Cassington style: third to first centuries. 1 Frilford, Oxon.; 2 Chastle- ton, Oxon.; 3-4 Cassington, Oxon.; 5 Yarnton, Oxon.; 6 Mount Farm, Oxon.; 7 Hatford, Berks.; 8 Cassington, Oxon.; 9 Boxford Common, Berks.; 10 Frilford, Oxon.; 11 Iffley, Oxon.; 12 Wokingham, Berks.; 13 Cassington, Oxon.; 14 Frilford, Oxon. (source: author).

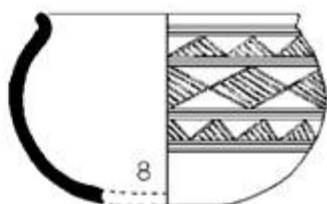
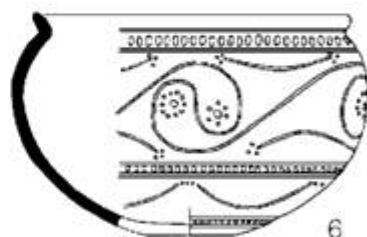
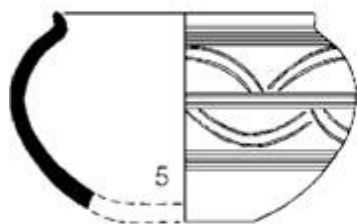
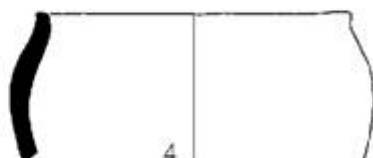
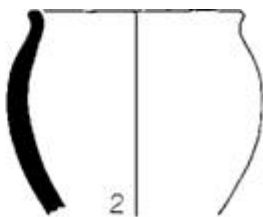
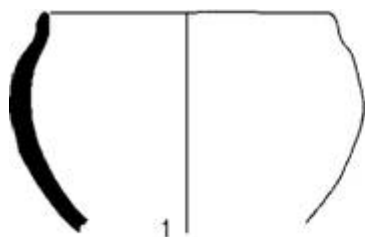


Figure A:26 *The Hunsbury–Draughton style: second century BC to first century AD. 1–4 Moulton Park, Northants; 5–6 Hunsbury, Northants; 7 Draughton, Northants; 8 Hunsbury, Northants (sources: 1–4 J.H. Williams 1974; 5–8 author).*

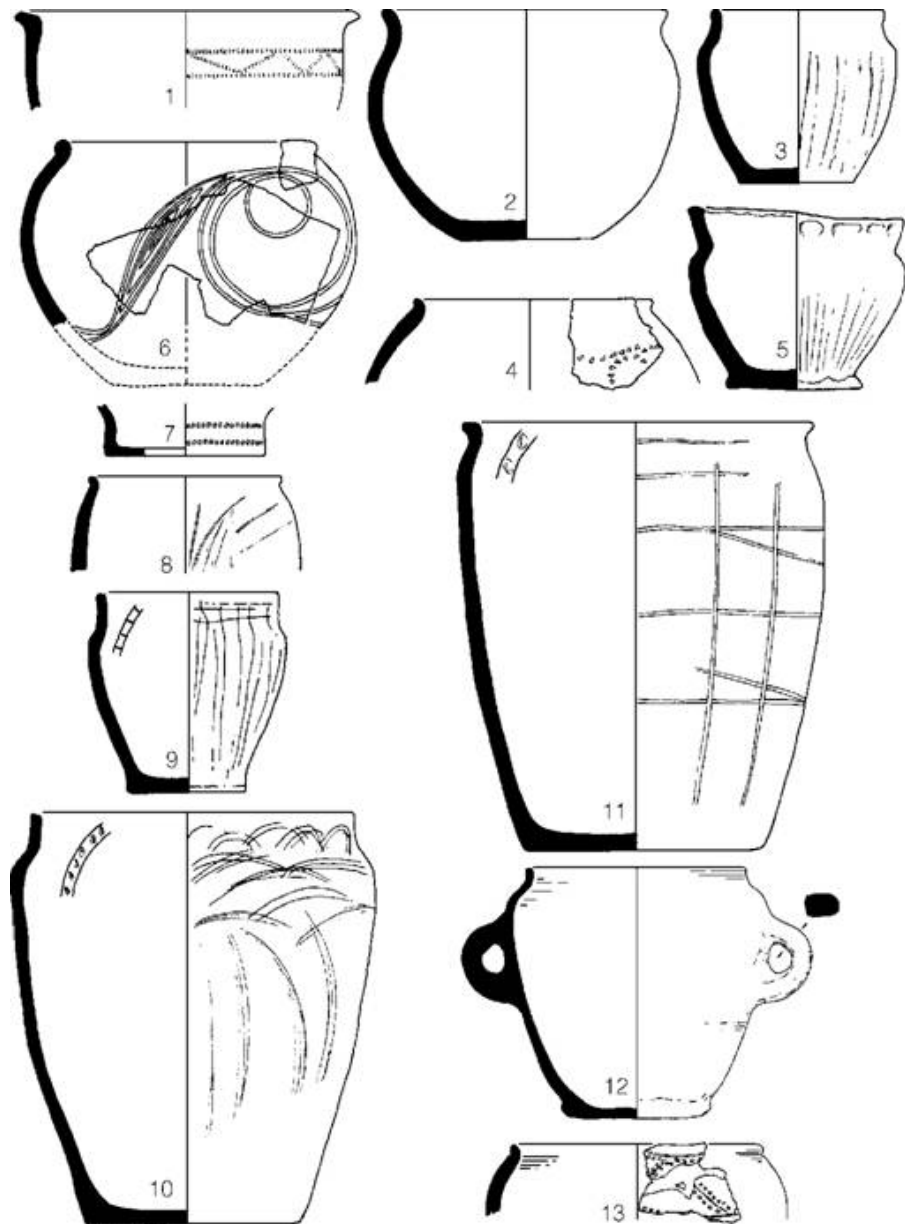


Figure A:27 Bowls and coarse ware from eastern England: third to first centuries. 1 Abington Pigotts, Cambs.; 2 South Wilson, Bucks.; 3 Slough, Bucks.; 4 Puddlehill, Beds.; 5 Abington Pigotts, Cambs.; 6 Puddlehill, Beds.; 7 St Ives, Hunts.; 8 Houghton, Hunts.; 9–11 Barley, Herts.; 12–13 Flitwick, Beds. (sources: 5–6 Matthews 1976; 12–13 Luke 1999; rest author).

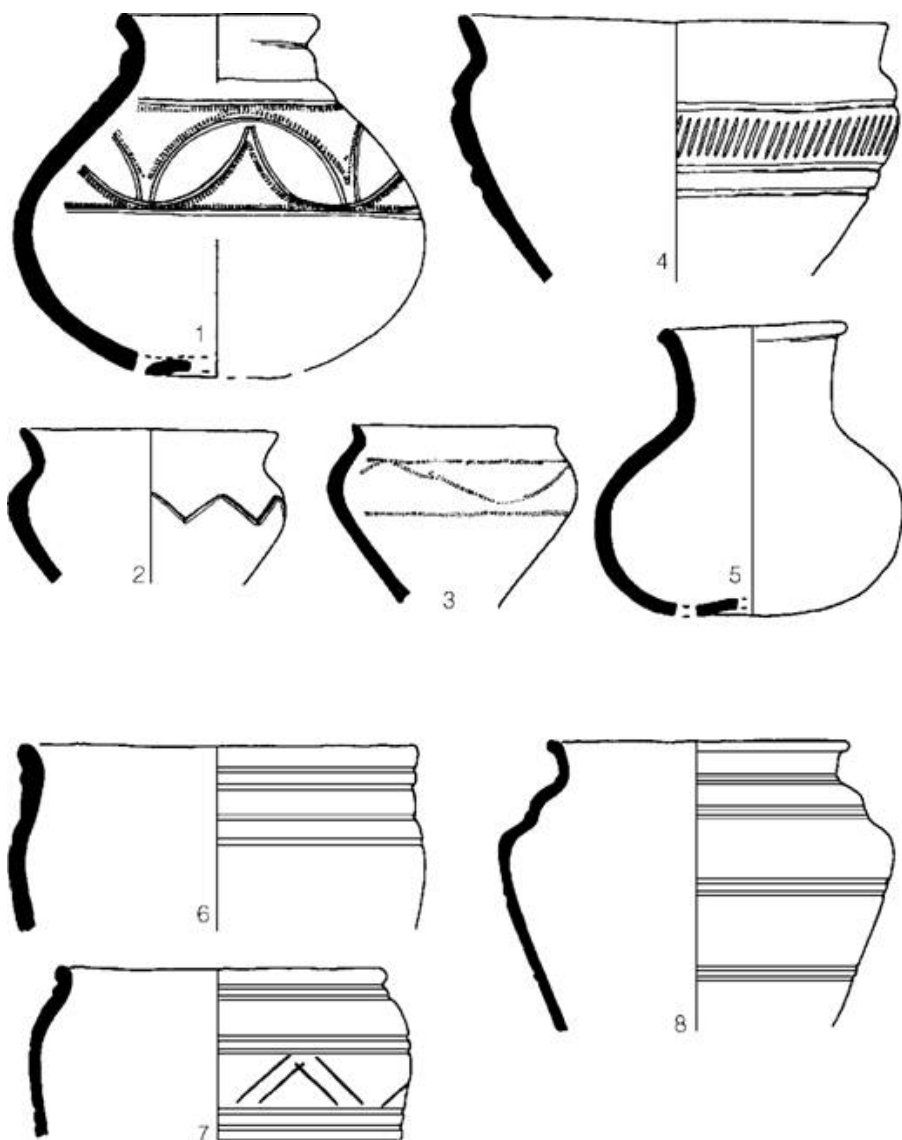


Figure A:28 *The Sleaford–Dragonby style: first century BC. All from Dragonby, Lincs.: 1–5 early, ?pre c. 50 BC; 6–8 later, c. 50–10 BC (source: May 1970).*

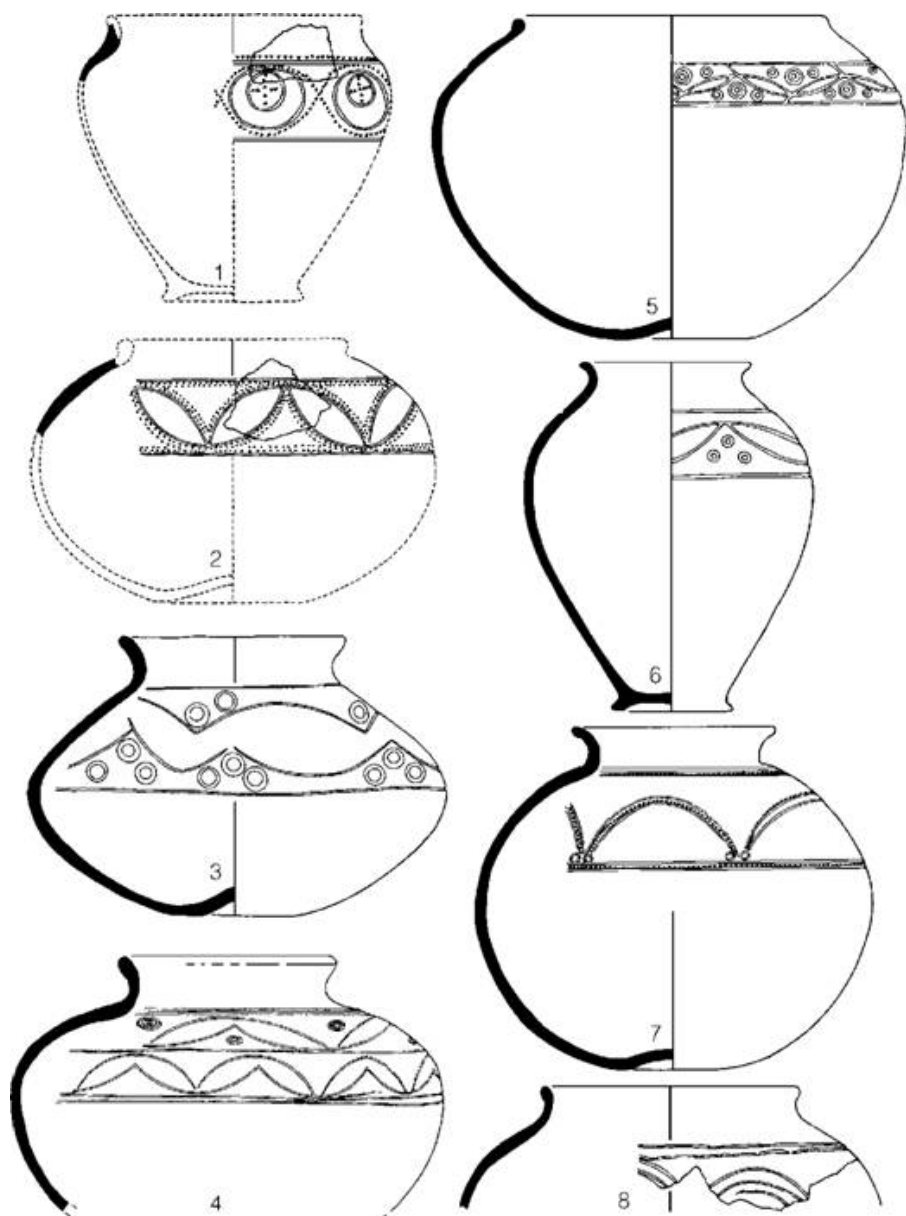


Figure A:29 *The Mucking–Crayford style (nos. 1–6) and the Late Caburn–Saltdean style (nos. 7 and 8). 1 Canvey Island, Essex; 2 Gun Hill, Essex; 3 Mucking, Essex; 4 Orset Cock, Essex; 5–6 Canewdon, Essex; 7 Saltdean, Sussex; 8 the Caburn, Sussex (sources: 1–2 Drury and Rodwell 1973; 3, 5, 6 Elsdon 1975; 4 Carter 1998; 7–8 author).*

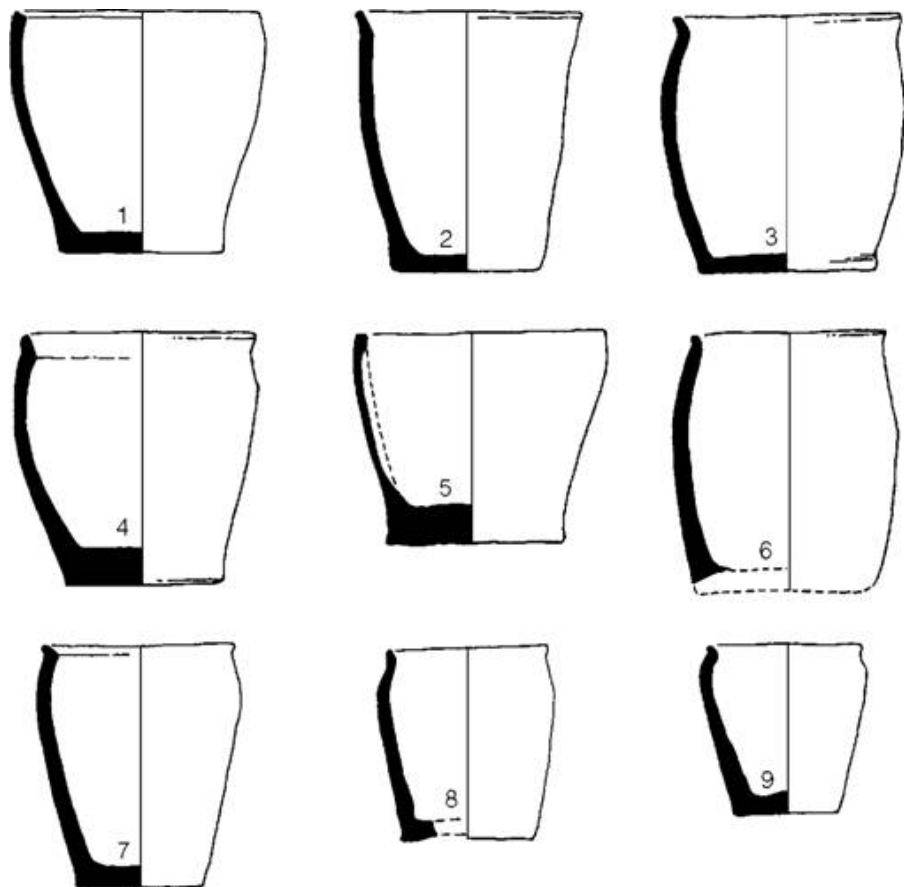


Figure A:30 *The Dane's Graves–Staxton style: third to first centuries. 1–6 Dane's Graves, Yorks.; 7–9 Driffield, Yorks. (source: Brewster 1963).*

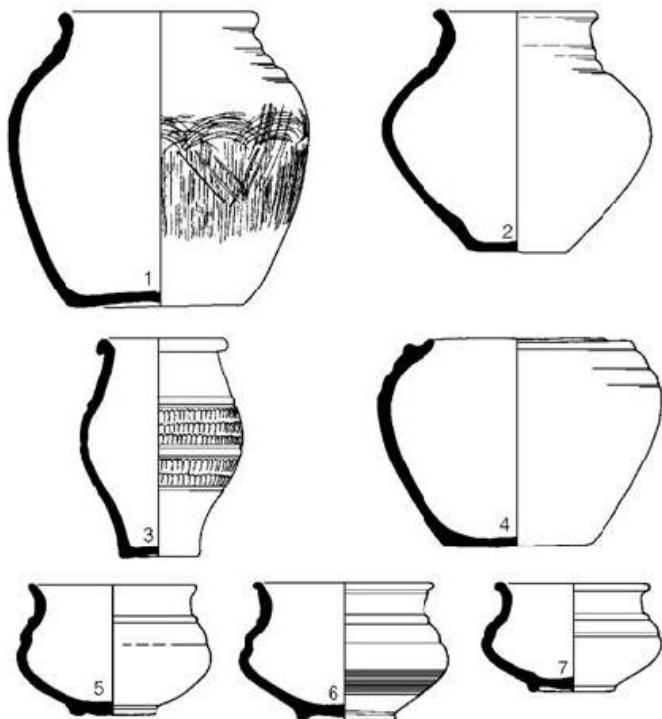


Figure A:31 *The Aylesford–Swarling style: c. 50 BC–AD 43. 1–7 Swarling, Kent (source: Birchall 1965).*

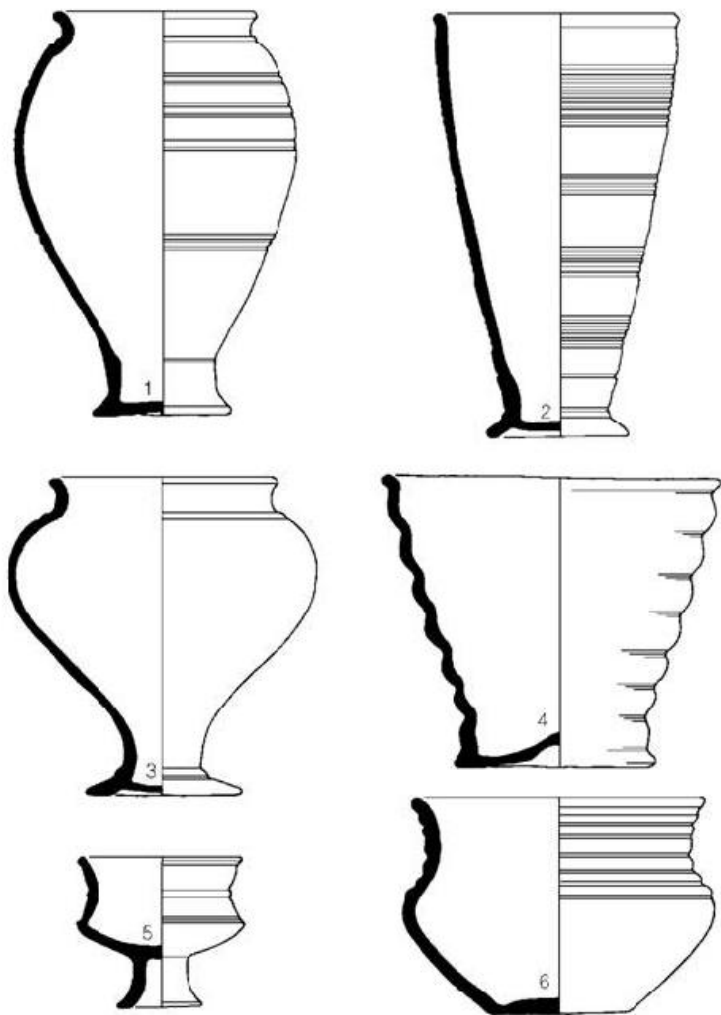


Figure A:32 The Aylesford–Swarling style: c. 50 BC–AD 43. 1–4 Swarling, Kent; 5 Welwyn, Herts.; 6 Aylesford, Kent (source: Birchall 1965).

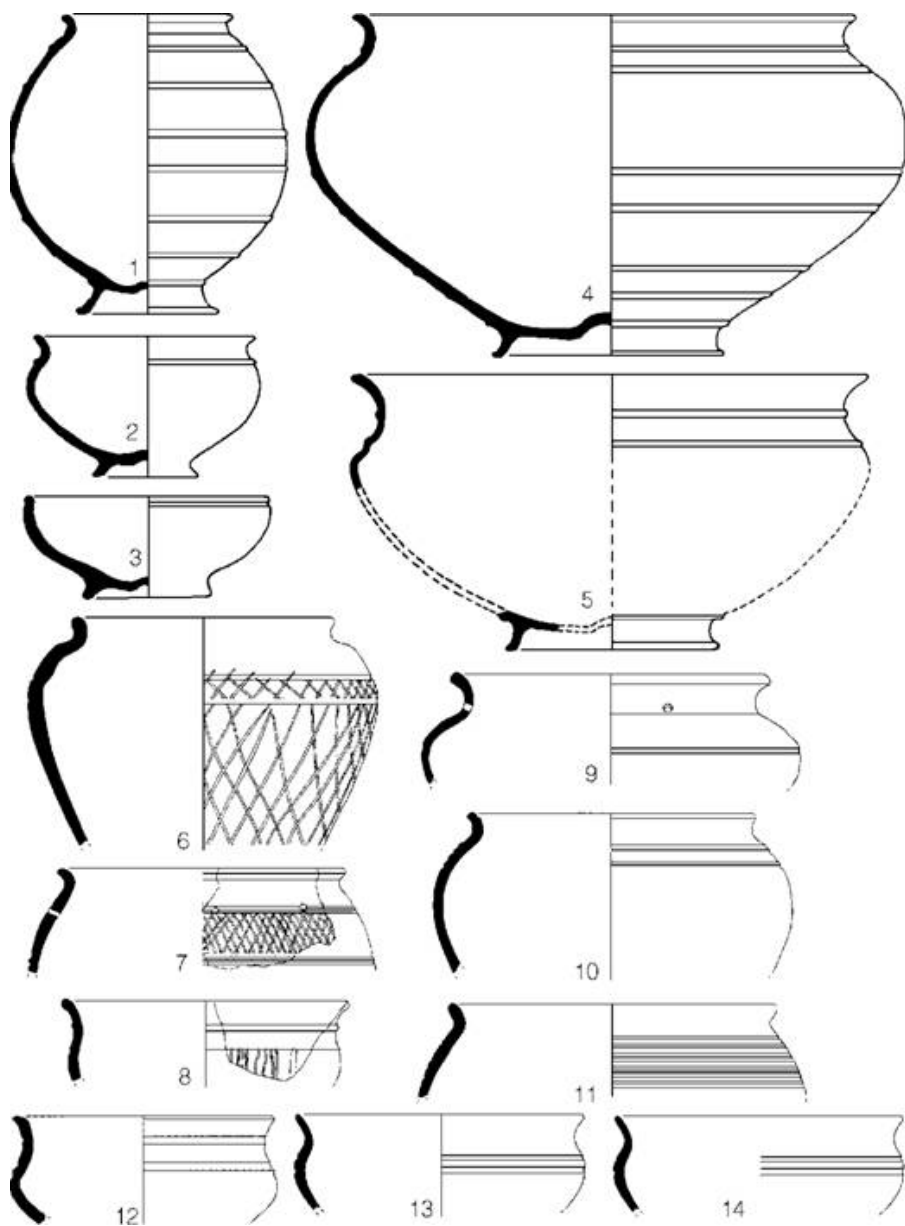


Figure A:33 Imported wares of Armorican origin found at Hengistbury Head, Hants: first century BC. 1–5 black cordoned ware; 6–9 graphite-coated ware; 10–14 granitic rilled wares (sources: 1–5 Bushe-Fox 1915; 6–14 Cunliffe and de Jersey 1997).

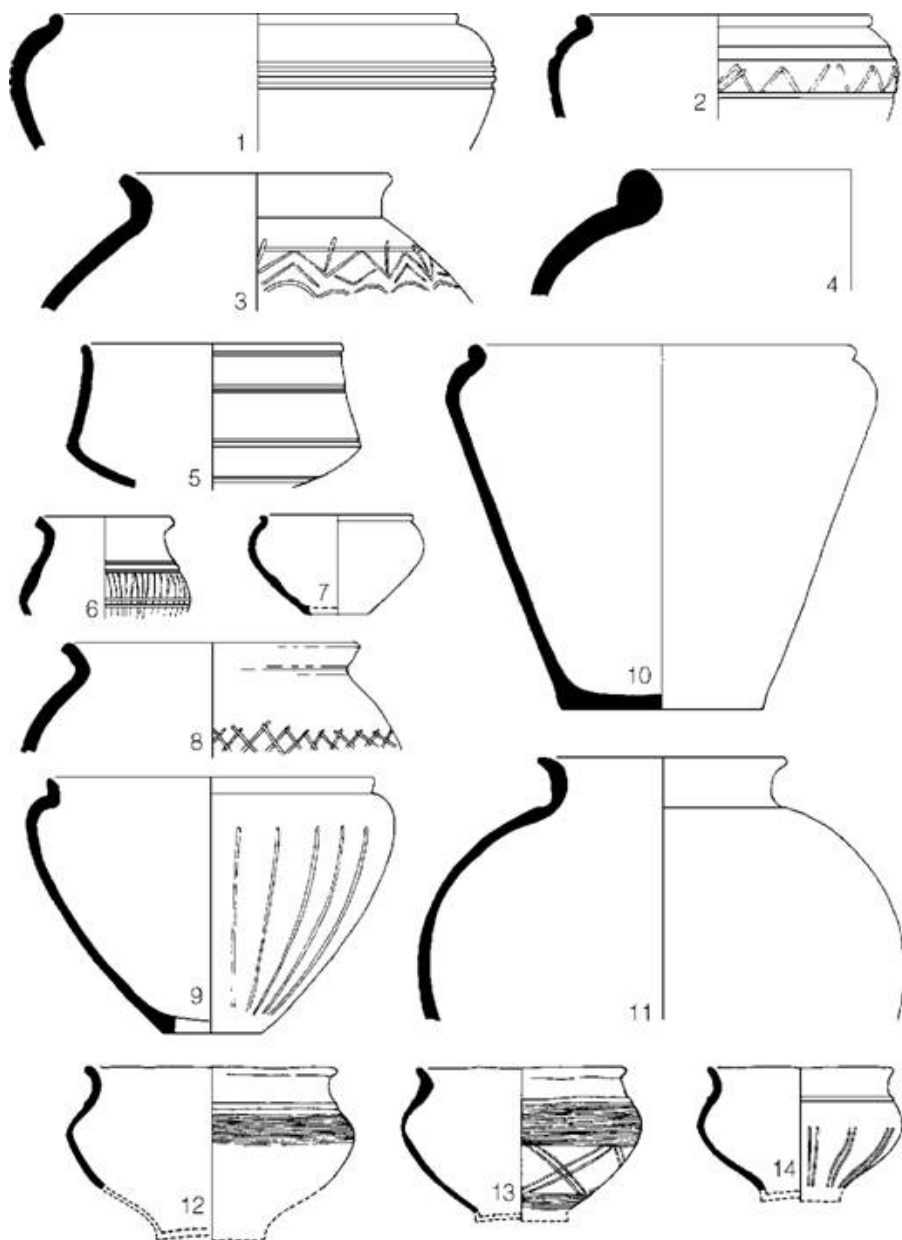


Figure A:34 Northern and Southern Atrebatic types: c. 50 BC–AD 43. 1 Oare, Wilts.; 2 Boscombe Down West, Wilts.; 3–7 Oare, Wilts.; 8 Winchester, Hants; 9–11 Horndean, Hants; 12–14 Chalton, Hants (source: author).

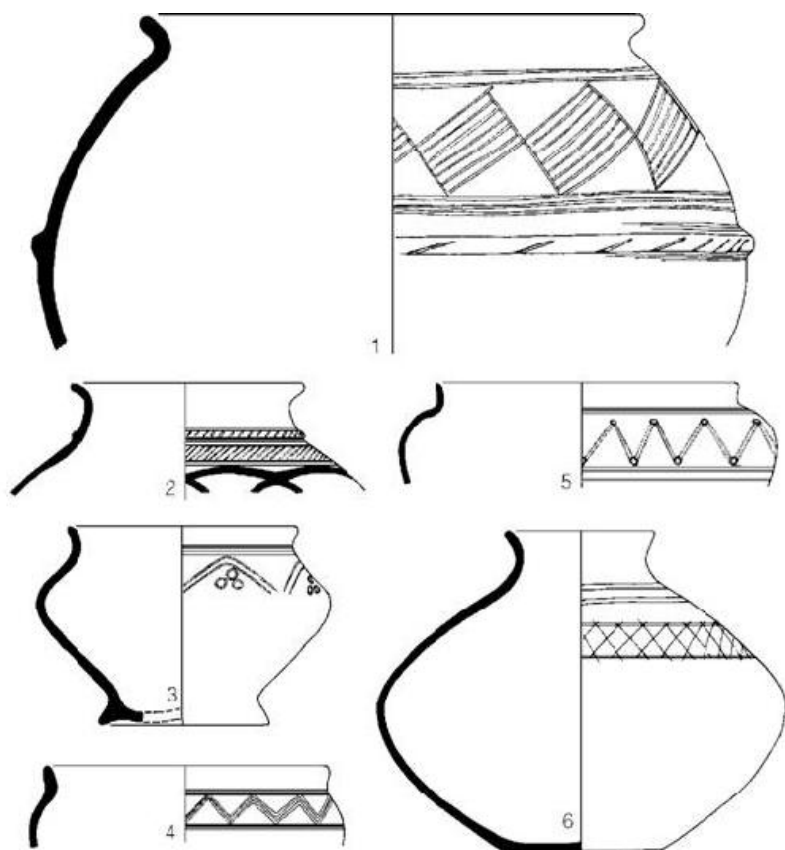


Figure A:35 Eastern Atrebatic types: c. 50 BC–AD 43. 1 Broadwater, Sussex; 2 Horsted Keynes, Sussex; 3 Little Horstead Lane, Sussex; 4 Glyne, Sussex; 5 Charleston Brow, Sussex; 6 Ashman, Sussex (source: author).

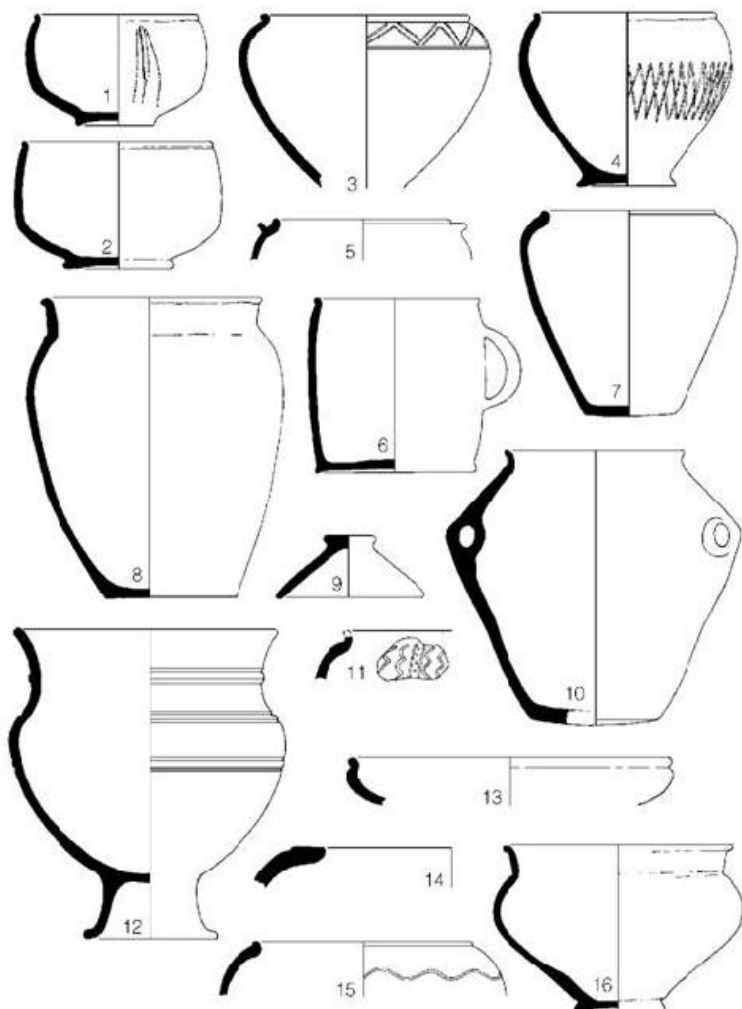


Figure A:36 Durotrigan types: c. 50 BC–AD 43. 1–10 Maiden Castle, Dorset; 11 Fitzworth, Dorset; 12–16 Maiden Castle, Dorset (source: author).

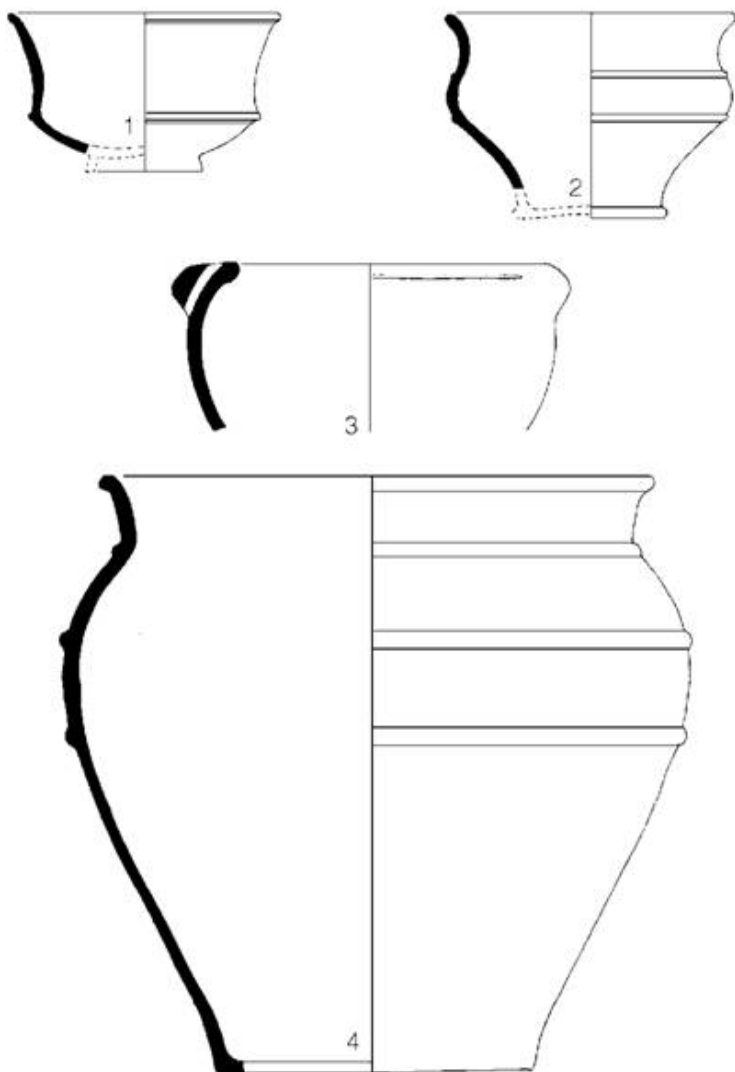


Figure A:37 Cordoned ware types: c. 50 BC–AD 43. 1–4 Carloggas Camp, St Mawgan-in-Pydar, Cornwall (source: Threipland 1957).

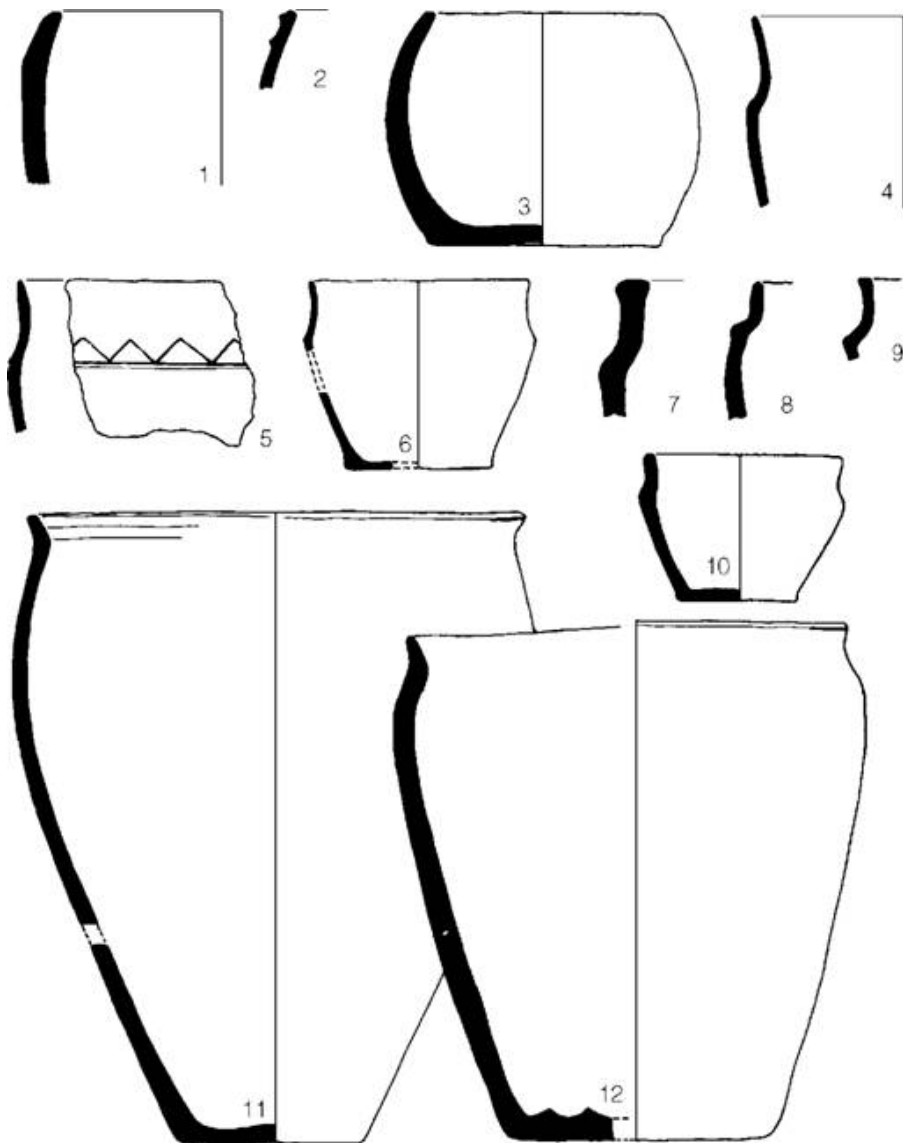


Figure A:38 Pottery from Shetland. 1 Clickhimin (Late Bronze Age); 2–3 Jarlshof (Late Bronze Age); 4–6 Clickhimin (first Iron Age farm); 7–10 Jarlshof (village II) (first Iron Age farm); 11–12 Clickhimin (fort period) (sources: Hamilton 1956, 1968).

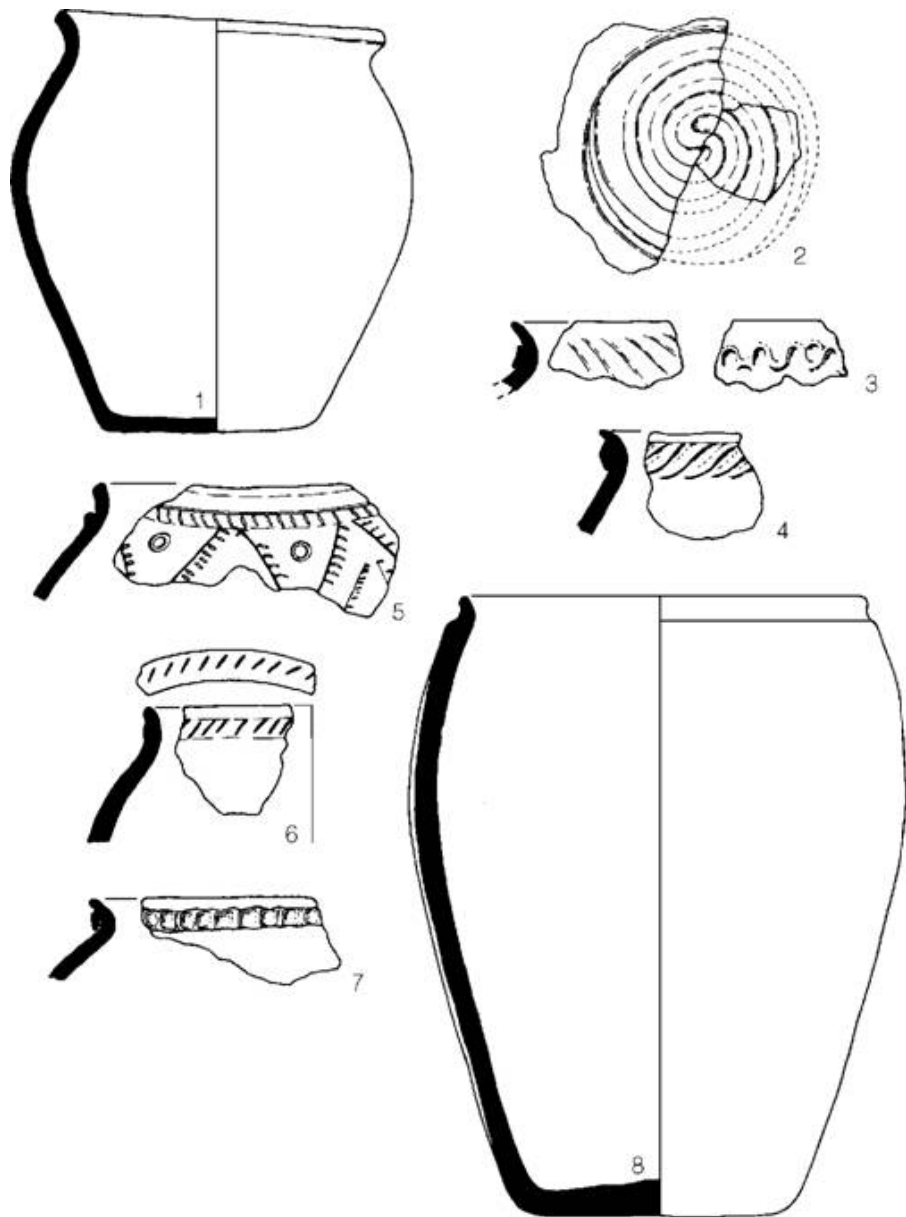


Figure A:39 Pottery from Orkney and Shetland. 1–4 Clickhimin (fort period); 5–6 Orkney (broch pottery); 7 Clickhimin (broch pottery); 8 Jarlshof (wheelhouse pottery) (sources: Hamilton 1956, 1968).

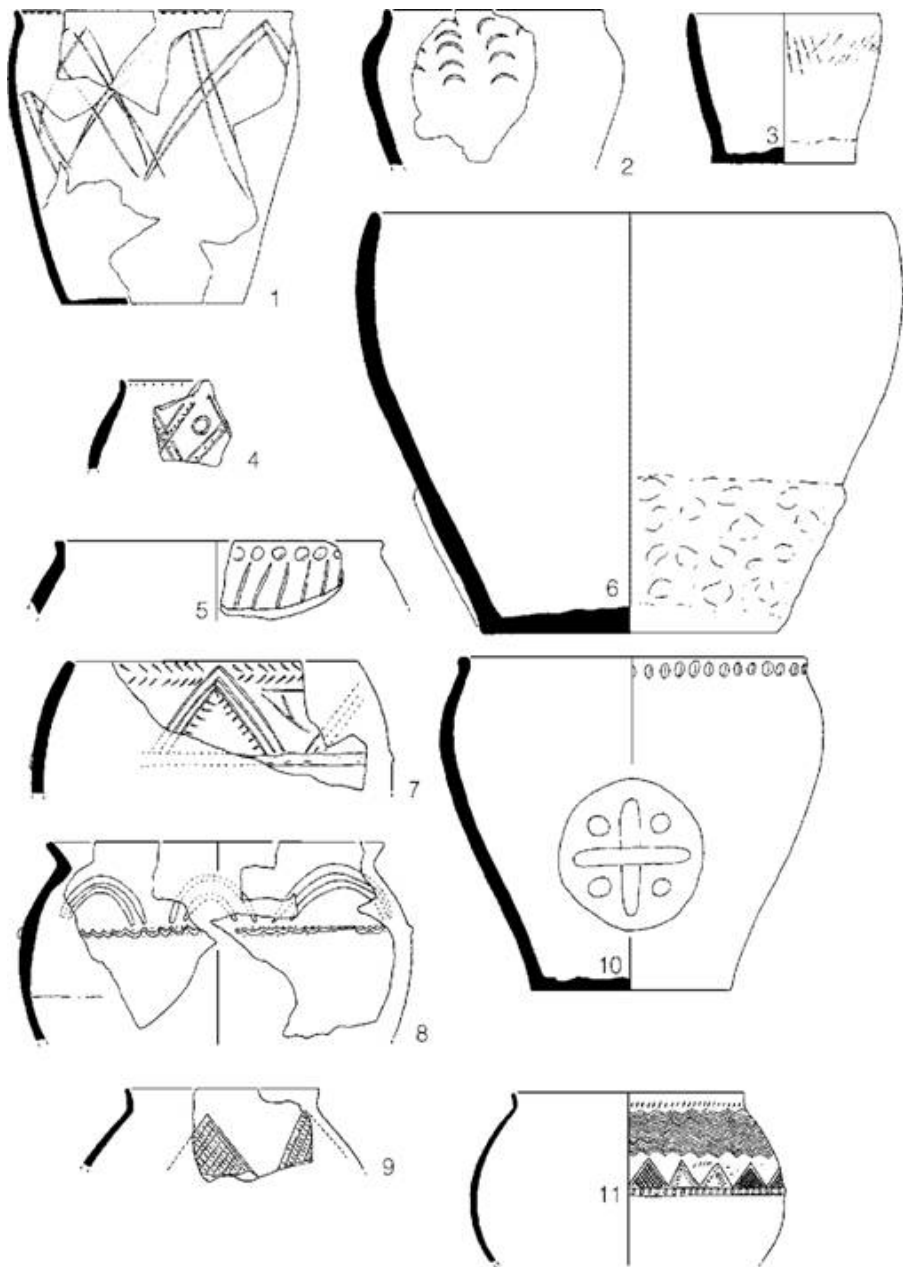


Figure A:40 Pottery from the Outer Hebrides: first century BC–second century AD. Sollas, North Uist. 1–6 From Site A; 7–11 Site B wheelhouse (source: Campbell 1991).

Appendix B

A note on radiocarbon dating

A very large number of radiocarbon dates are now available for the first millennium BC and many of them are made use of in the text. In earlier editions of this book we included a list of dates, in the third edition (1991, 593–608) comprising some 469 individual assessments from 101 sites. Since then the number available has greatly increased. For this edition it has been decided to omit the date list altogether rather than to update it (and thus considerably increase the length of this book). For those wishing to access the more recent dates for each year until 2000 the journal *Archaeometry* has published lists of dates generated by the Oxford Radiocarbon Laboratory with an additional list (as a supplement to Vol. 44 for 2002) reviewing dates measured since 1996.

Methods for quoting radiocarbon dates and for using them to arrive at best estimates for real dates have developed rapidly over the years. Since radiocarbon years are not real years it became a convention to quote them as bc/ad. This practice, though never widely accepted by radiocarbon scientists, soon became rooted in the archaeological literature. Dates were quoted with their standard deviation (σ) e.g. 200 bc $\pm$ 60. In theory this meant that there is a 68 per cent probability that the actual date (bc) lay anywhere within the range 140–260 bc. To increase the probability to 95 per cent the 2 σ band width is used. Thus for a radiocarbon assessment of 200 bc $\pm$ 60 there is a 95 per cent chance of the date (bc) lying between 80 and 320 BC. (There is an added complication that the standard deviation quoted is not a realistic assessment of the overall error and it should be multiplied by a factor.) The bc method of citation has now been largely abandoned.

In recent years much effort has been expended on the problem of calibrating radiocarbon years to calendar years. Several calibration curves have been produced. The most reliable, and those now universally accepted, have been published by Stuiver and Pearson (1986) and Pearson and Stuiver (1986) for the years from 2500 BC to the present. These curves have been based on the high-precision dating of tree rings from known age samples. The resulting curves for the period which concerns us are reproduced ([Figure B:1](#)) here incorporating 1 σ error bands. The wiggles in the curve introduce an

additional uncertainty. For example a single radiocarbon date of 250 BC could be produced by samples with calendar ages of 353, 306 or 236 BC. If one standard deviation is ± 60 then there is a 68 per cent probability of the date lying within the range 379–186 BC and a 95 per cent probability of it falling between 400 and 100 BC. These calculations can be made on the basis of the published curve, a set of tables or, more simply, a computer programme listed and described by Stuiver and Reimer (1986) using the curve discussed in Stuiver and Becker 1986.

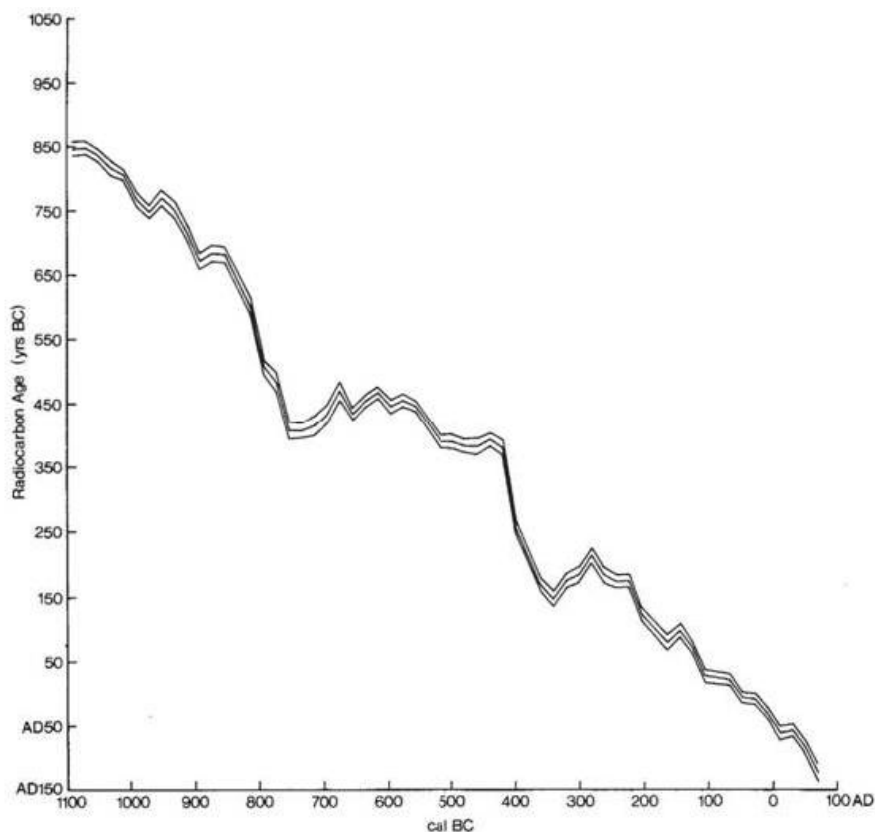


Figure B:1 Radiocarbon calibration curves (sources: Stuiver and Pearson 1986 and Pearson and Stuiver 1986).

The date 250 BC falls on part of the curve where the wiggles are at their most complex. If we take another example, 370 BC, from a simpler part of the curve, the correlation – that is the calibrated date BC, referred to as Cal BC – is 395. With a standard deviation of ± 60 , the range is 405–378 but at 2σ it becomes 520–350 or 307 to 235 because the increased probability brings the date within the range of

one of the wiggles.

Standing back from all these complexities one is bound to conclude that radiocarbon assessments for the first millennium BC are not particularly helpful in creating reliable chronologies. If 95 per cent probability is used the range of possibilities for the average date becomes so wide as to be almost meaningless. At 68 per cent probability, parts of the curve are able to give greater precision, but even so individual dates between 570 and 430 BC and 310–190 BC are best disregarded. This said, techniques of high-precision dating or of ‘wiggle-matching’ using a series of samples from the growth rings of timber hold out exciting possibilities for more precise chronologies (Pearson 1986). It remains, however, an unfortunate fact that the general flatness of the calibration curve means that the period 800–400 BC will remain particularly difficult to date precisely using radiocarbon methods. Where there is additional information, for example a stratigraphic and therefore a temporal order, which includes some radiocarbon dates measured from beyond the flat part of the calibration curve, statistical methods using a Bayesian approach can often make a striking improvement to the chronological precision. These mysteries are well explored by Buck, Cavanagh and Litton (1996).

The literature on calibration is considerable and fast growing, but an invaluable introduction is provided by Pearson (1987) to which the curious or the puzzled are confidently referred.

Appendix C

List of principal sites

The major sites mentioned in the text above are listed here in alphabetical order, together with their more significant bibliographical references or, if unpublished, the source of the information or location of the finds. No attempt has been made to list all of the references for each site, nor have sites of only passing significance been included. Where county boundaries have changed as a result of local government reorganization old county names are given in brackets before the new.

- Abernethy, *see* Castle Law, Perth.
Abingdon, Oxon. *Allen* 1995
Abington Pigotts, Cambs. *Fox* 1924
Adabrock (Lewis), Western Isles Islands Area *Coles* 1962b, 48-50
Aldermaston, Berks. *Bradley, Lobb, Richards and Robinson* 1980
Aldwinckle, Northants *Jackson* 1977
Allasdale, Isle of Barra (Inverness.), Western Isles Islands Area
Young 1955
All Cannings Cross, Wilts. *Cunnington* 1923
Allen's Pit (Dorchester), Oxon. *Bradford* 1942b
Almondbury, *see* Castle Hill, Yorks.
Alnham, *see* High Knowes, Northumberland
Ampleforth Moor (Yorks.), North Yorks. *Wainwright and Longworth*
1969
Ancaster, Lincs. *May* 1965-9, 1976b
Angle Ditch, *see* Handley Down, Dorset
Anstiebury, Surrey *Thompson* 1979
Appleford (Berks.), Oxon. *Hinchcliffe and Thomas* 1980
Arbury Camp, Cambs. *Evans and Knight* 2002
Ardleigh, Essex *Erith and Longworth* 1960
Arminghall, Norfolk *Clark* 1936
Arras (Yorks.), Humberside *Stead* 1965; *Greenwell* 1906
Asham (Sussex), East Sussex *Curwen* 1930
Ashville, Oxon. *Parrington* 1978
Atwick (Yorks.), Humberside *Greenwell and Gatty* 1910; *Brewster*
1963, 143
Aust (Glos.), Avon *Ellis* 1900; *Smith* 1925, 148; *Dawson* 1980

- Aves Ditch, Oxon. *Sauer* 1999
 Aylesford, Kent *Evans* 1890; *Birchall* 1963, 1965; *Stead* 1971a
 Bacon Hole (Glam.), West Glamorgan *Williams* 1939b
 Badbury, Dorset *Crawford and Keiller* 1928
 Bagendon, Glos. *Clifford* 1961; *Courtney and Hall* 1984
 Baldock, Herts. *Stead* 1971a; *Stead and Rigby* 1986
 Balevullin, Tiree (Argyll.), Strathclyde Region *MacKie* 1965b
 Barksbury, Hants. *J. Hawkes* 1940; *Wainwright* 1970a; *Wainwright and Davies* 1995; *Ellis and Rawlings* 2001
 Balloch Hill, Argyll. *Peltenburg* 1982
 Balmashanner (Angus), Tayside Region *Coles* 1962b, 98–9
 Bampton, Oxon. *Savory* 1939
 Banwell (Som.), Avon *Unpublished: Taunton Museum*
 Barbury Castle, Wilts. *MacGregor and Simpson* 1963
 Barford, Warwicks. *Oswald* 1969
 Barham, Suffolk *Martin* 1993
 Barley, Herts. *Cra'ster* 1961
 Barn Down West, Wilts. *Fowler, Musty and Taylor* 1965
 Barnes, Isle of Wight, Hants *Preston and Hawkes* 1933
 Barnwood, Glos. *Clifford* 1934
 Barton Court Farm, Oxon. *Miles* 1984
 Bath (Som.), Avon *Cunliffe* 1988c
 Bathampton Down (Som.), Avon *Wainwright* 1967b
 Battersea, London *Fox* 1958, pls. 14, 16 Battlesbury, Wilts. *Chadwick and Thompson* 1956
 Bawsey, Norfolk *Maryon* 1944
 Beacon Hill (Burghclere), Hants *Williams-Freeman* 1915; *Eagles* 1992
 Beaulieu Heath, Hants *Piggott* 1953
 Beckford (Worcs.), Heref. and Worcs. *Oswald* 1974; *Britnell* 1974, 1975
 Beeston Castle, Cheshire *Ellis* 1993
 Belle Tout (Sussex), East Sussex *Bradley* 1971b
 Belling Law, Northumberland *Jobey* 1977
 Bexley Heath (Kent), Greater London *Inv. Arch. GB 8th Set* (1960), 53
 Bigbury, Kent *Jessup and Cook* 1936; *Thompson* 1983; *Clark and Thompson* 1989; *Blockley and Blockley* 1990
 Billericay, Essex *Fox* 1958, 96
 Bindon, Dorset *Wheeler* 1953
 Birdlip, Glos. *Bellows* 1881; *Green* 1949; *Staelens* 1983
 Bishopston (Glam.), West Glamorgan *Williams* 1940
 Bishopstone (Sussex), East Sussex *Bell* 1977
 Blackbury Castle, Devon *Young and Richardson* 1955
 Blackpatch (Sussex), East Sussex *Drewett* 1980, 1982

- Blackthorn, Northants *Williams* 1974
- Blagden Copse, Hants *Stead* 1970
- Blaise Castle Hill (Glos.), Avon *Rahitz and Brown* 1959
- Bledlow, Bucks. *Head and Piggott* 1944
- Blewburton Hill (Berks.), Oxon. *Collins* 1947, 1953; *Collins and Collins* 1959; *Bradford* 1942c; *Harding* 1976a
- Blissmoor, Dartmoor, Devon *Fox* 1955
- Block Fen, Cambs. *Evans* 1993
- Bodrifty, Cornwall *Dudley* 1957
- Bonchester Hill (Roxburgh.), Borders Region *Curie* 1910; *Piggott* 1952
- Borough Hill, Northants *Jackson* 1994, 1998
- Boscombe Down East, Wilts. *Stone* 1936
- Boscombe Down West, Wilts. *Richardson* 1951
- Bower Walls Camp (Som.), Avon *Cotton* 1955, 85–6
- Boxford Common, Berks. *Peake, Coghlan and Hawkes* 1932, 1933
- Brackmills, Northants *Chapman* 1998
- Braes of Gight (Aberdeen.), Grampian Region *Coles* 1962b, 94–5
- Braich y Cornel (Caerns.) Gwynedd *Gresham* 1973
- Braidwood Fort (Midlothian), Lothian Region *Stevenson* 1949; *Piggott* 1960
- Braintree (Mount House), Essex *Eddy* 1983
- Bramdean, Hants *Perry* 1974, 1982, 1986
- Brampton (Hunts.), Cambs. *White* 1969
- Brantingham (Yorks.), East Yorks. *Dent* 1989
- Bredon Hill (Worcs.), Heref. and Worcs. *Hencken* 1938
- Breedon-on-the-Hill, Leics. *Kenyon* 1950; *Wacher* 1964, 1979
- Breiddin (Mont.), Powys *B.H. St J. O'Neil* 1937; *Musson* 1976, 1991; *Buckland et al.* 2001
- Brentford (Middx.), Greater London *Fox* 1958, pl. 3; *O'Connor* 1978
- Brentford, Old England (Middx.), Greater London *Wheeler* 1929
- Briar Hill, Northants *Jackson* 1974
- Bridport (West Bay), Dorset *Farrar* 1954
- Brigstock, Northants *Jackson* 1983
- Broadall Lake, Devon *Fox* 1955
- Broadwater (Sussex), West Sussex *Curwen* 1954
- Bromfield, Essex *Atkinson* 1995
- Bromfield, Salop *Stanford* 1982; *Hughes* 1994
- Brooklands, *see* Weybridge
- Broughing, Herts. (incl. Skeleton Green and Puckeridge) *Partridge* 1979, 1981, 1982b; *Potter and Trow* 1988
- Brough Law, Northumberland *Jobey* 1971c
- Broxmouth (East Lothian), Lothian Region *Hill* 1982a
- Bryn Eryr, Anglesey *Longley* 1998

Bryn y Castell (Caerns.), Gwynedd *Crew* 1984, 1985; *Mighall and Chambers* 1989, 1997
 Bu Broch (Orkney), Orkney Islands Area *Hedges* 1987
 Buckland Rings, Hants *Hawkes* 1936a
 Bucklesham, Suffolk *Martin* 1999
 Budbury, Wilts. *Wainwright* 1970b
 Bugthorpe (Yorks.), Humberside *Greenwell* 1877; *Stead* 1965, 104
 Bulbury, Dorset *E. Cunnington* 1884; *Cunliffe* 1972b
 Bulwarks, the (Glam.), West Glamorgan *Davies* 1974
 Buntley, Suffolk *Unpublished: pottery in Ipswich Museum*
 Burgh, Suffolk *Martin* 1999
 Burnmouth (Berwick.), Borders Region *Craw* 1924
 Burradon, Northumberland *Jobey* 1970
 Burton Fleming (Yorks.), Humberside *Stead* 1971b, 1976b, 1991a
 Bury Hill (Glos.), Avon *Davies and Phillips* 1929
 Bury Hill, Hants *Hawkes* 1940a; *Cunliffe and Poole* 2000b
 Bury Wood Camp, Wilts. *King* 1961, 1962, 1967
 Butcombe (Som.), Avon *Fowler* 1970
 Caburn, the (Sussex), East Sussex *Curwen and Curwen* 1927; *Wilson* 1938, 1939; *Hawkes* 1939a; *Hamilton* 1998; *Drewett and Hamilton* 1999
 Caer Cadwgan (Cards.), Dyfed *Austin* 1984, 1985
 Caesars Camp, Wimbledon (Surrey), Greater London *Lowther* 1947
 Cairnconan (Angus), Tayside Region *Jervise* 1863
 Calf of Eday (Orkney), Orkney Islands Area *Calder* 1939
 Calleva (Silchester), Hants *Boon* 1969; *Fulford* 1987, 1993; *Fulford and Timby* 2000
 Cambridge, Cambs. *Cra'ster* 1969
 Camerton (Som.), Avon *Wedlake* 1958; *R. Jackson* 1990
 Camulodunum (Colchester), Essex *Hawkes and Hull* 1947; *Crummy* 1980a, 1980b; *Hawkes and Crummy* 1995; *Brooks, Benfield and Garrod* 1995
 Canterbury, Kent *Frere* 1954
 Cardiff (Glam.), South Glamorgan *Nash-Williams* 1933b
 Carloggas (St Mawgan-in-Pydar), Cornwall *Threipland* 1957
 Carn Euny, Cornwall *Christie* 1978
 Carn Fadrun (Caerns.), Gwynedd RCHM *Caernarvonshire III*, no. 1650
 Carshalton, Surrey *Lowther* 1945; *Adkins and Needham* 1985
 Cassington, Oxon. *Leeds* 1935; *Harden* 1942
 Castell Coyan (Carm.), Dyfed *Grealey, Jones and Little* 1972
 Castell Henllys (Pembs.), Dyfed *Mytum* 1986, 1987, 1989, 1998; *Mytum et al.* 1998
 Castell Odo (Caerns.), Gwynedd *Alcock* 1961
 Castercliff, Lancs. *Coombs* 1982

- Casterley Camp, Wilts. *Cunnington and Cunnington* 1913
- Castle Ditch (Eddisbury), Cheshire *Varley* 1950a; *Cocroft, Everson, Jecock and Wilson* 1989
- Castle Ditches, Llacarfan (Glam.), West Glamorgan *Hogg* 1977
- Castle Dore, Cornwall *Radford* 1951
- Castle Gotha, Cornwall *Saunders* 1961; *Saunders and Harris* 1982
- Castle Hill, Almondbury (Yorks.), West Yorks. *Varley* 1939, 1976; *Gilks* 1992
- Castle Hill, Horsburgh (Peebles.), Borders Region *Feachem* 1966
- Castle Hill, Newhaven (Sussex), East Sussex *Hawkes* 1939c
- Castle Hill, Scarborough (Yorks.), North Yorks. *Smith* 1928, 1934
- Castle Hill, Tonbridge, Kent *Money* 1973
- Castle Law (Midlothian), Lothian Region *Childe* 1933; *Piggott and Piggott* 1954
- Castle Law (Perths.), Tayside Region (see also *Forgandenny Christison and Anderson* 1899
- Cerrig y Drudion (Denbigh.), Clwyd *Fox* 1958; *Smith* 1926; *Stead* 1982
- Chalbury, Dorset *Whitley* 1943
- Chalton, Hants *Cunliffe* 1970, 1976a
- Charleston Brow (Sussex), East Sussex *Parson and Curwen* 1933
- Chastleton, Oxon. *Leeds* 1931a
- Cherbury (Berks.), Oxon. *Bradford* 1940
- Chertsey, Surrey *Unpublished: Guildford Museum*
- Chilham Castle, Kent *Parfitt* 1998
- Chinnor, Oxon. *Richardson and Young* 1951
- Chippenham, Cambs. *Leaf* 1936
- Chisbury, Wilts. *Cunnington* 1932a
- Chisenbury Trench, Wilts. *Cunnington* 1932b
- Cholesbury Camp, Bucks. *Kimball* 1933
- Cholwich Town, Devon *Fleming and Collis* 1973
- Chun, Cornwall *Leeds* 1927
- Chysauster, Cornwall *Hencken* 1933; *Wood* 2001
- Cissbury (Sussex), West Sussex *Curwen and Williamson* 1931
- Claydon Pike, Lechlade, Glos. *Miles and Palmer* 1982
- Cleeve Hill, Glos. *Gray and Brewer* 1904
- Cletraval (North Uist), Western Isles Islands Area *Scott* 1948
- Clickhimin (Shetland), Shetland Islands Area *Hamilton* 1966, 1968
- Clotherholme (Yorks.), North Yorks. *Manby* 1963
- Clovelly Dykes, Devon *Fox* 1953
- Clynnog (Caerns.), Gwynedd *Grimes* 1951
- Cock Hill (Sussex), West Sussex *Ratcliffe-Densham and Ratcliffe-Densham* 1961
- Colchester, Essex (see also *Camulodunum*) *Fox and Hull* 1948

- Cold Kitchen Hill, Wilts. *Cunnington and Goddard* 1934
 Collfryn (Mont.), Powys *Britnell et al.* 1989
 Colsterworth, Lincs. *Grimes* 1961
 Conway Mountain (Caerns.), Gwynedd *Griffiths and Hogg* 1957
 Corley Camp, Warwicks. *Chatwin* 1930
 Covesea, Sculpture Cave (Moray.), Grampian Region *Benton* 1931
 Cow Down, Wilts., *see* Longbridge Deverill, Wilts.
 Cowlam (Yorks.), Humberside *Stead* 1965, 105; *Greenwell* 1877
 Coxhoe, Co. Durham *Van der Veen and Haselgrove* 1983; *Haselgrove and Allon* 1982
 Coygan Camp (Carm.), Dyfed *Wainwright* 1967a
 Craig Phadrig (Inverness.), Highland Region *Small and Cottam* 1972
 Crane Godrevy (Gwithian), Cornwall *Thomas* 1964
 Crawcwellt West, (Merioneth.), Gwynedd *Crew* 1989, 1998
 Crayford, Kent *Ward Perkins* 1938
 Credenhill Camp (Heref.) Heref. and Worcs. *Stanford* 1971a
 Creting St Mary, Suffolk *Clarke* 1939
 Crickley Hill, Glos. *Dixon* 1972a, 1972b, 1973, 1976, 1994; *Dixon and Borne* 1977
 Croft Ambrey (Heref.), Heref. and Worcs. *Stanford* 1967, 1974a
 Cromer, Norfolk *Clarke* 1960, pl. 20
 Crosby Ravensworth (Westmorland), Cumbria *Way* 1869
 Crosskirk, Caithness *Fairhurst* 1984
 Cullykhan (Buchan), Grampian Region *Greig* 1972
 Culver Hole Cave, *see* Llangenydd (Glam.)
 Cwmbrwyn (Carm.), Dyfed *Ward* 1907
 Cwm Ystradllyn (Caerns.), Gwynedd *Gresham* 1973
 Dainton, Devon *Willis and Rogers* 1951
 Dalton Parlours (Yorks.), West Yorks. *Sumpter* 1988; *Wrathmell and Nicholson* 1990
 Danebury, Hants *Cunliffe* 1984a, 1995a; *Cunliffe and Poole* 1991
 Dane's Camp (Worcs.), Heref. and Worcs. *Unpublished excavation*
 Dane's Graves (Yorks.), Humberside *Stead* 1965, 105; *Greenwell* 1906; *Mortimer* 1911
 Dan y Coed (Pembs.), Dyfed *Williams* 1988
 Darmsden, Suffolk *Cunliffe* 1968a; *Balkwill* 1979
 Deal, Kent *Woodruff* 1904
 Denbury, Devon *Fox* 1961b
 Dennis Pit (Old Marden), Oxon. *Unpublished: Ashmolean Museum*
 Desborough, Northants *Fox* 1958
 Deskford (Banff.), Grampian Region *Piggott* 1959
 Diddington, Cambs. *Jones* 1997
 Dinas Emrys (Caerns.), Gwynedd *Savory* 1961
 Dinorben (Denbigh.), Clwyd *Gardner and Savory* 1964; *Savory*

1971a, 1971b; *Guilbert* 1979a, 1980
 Dod (Roxburgh.), Borders Region *Smith* 1980, 1982
 Dorton, Bucks. *Farley* 1983
 Douglasmuir (Angus), Tayside Region *Kendrick* 1982
 Down Barn West (Winterbourne Gunner), Wilts. *Fowler, Musty and Taylor* 1965
 Dragonby (Lincs.), Humberside *May* 1976a, 1996; *Elsdon and May* 1987
 Draughton, Northants *Grimes* 1961
 Driffield (Yorks.), Humberside *Brewster* 1963, 147
 Drim Camp (Pembs.), Dyfed *Williams* 1988
 Dryburn Bridge (East Lothian), Lothian Region *Triscott* 1982
 Dun an Ruigh, Loch Broom (Ross and Cromarty), Highlands Region *MacKie* 1980
 Dun Ardtreck (Skye), Highlands Region *MacKie* 2000
 Dun Bharabhat, Cnib (Lewis), Western Isles Islands Area *Harding and Dixon* 2000
 Dunion (Roxburgh.), Borders Region *Rideout* 1992
 Dun Lagaidh (Wester Ross), Highlands Region *Current Arch.* 12 (1969), 8–13
 Dun Mor Vaul, Tiree (Argyll.), Strathclyde Region *MacKie* 1974
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 Emmotland (Yorks.), Humberside *Brewster* 1963
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 Farley Mount, Hants *Bowen and Fowler* 1966
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 Figsbury, Wilts. *Cunnington 1925*
 Finavon (Angus), Tayside Region *Childe 1935a; MacKie 1969b*
 Findon Park (Sussex), West Sussex *Fox and Wolseley 1928*
 Fishbourne (Sussex), West Sussex *Cunliffe 1971b*
 Fisherwick, Staffs. *C. Smith 1979*
 Fiskerton, Lincs. *Field 1986*
 Fison Way, Thetford, Norfolk *Gregory 1991, 1992*
 Fitzworth, Dorset *Calkin 1949*
 Fiveways/New Buildings, Hants *Cunliffe and Poole 2000d*
 Flag Fen, Peterborough (Northants), Cambs. *Pryor 1992*
 Flitwick, Beds. *Luke 1999*
 Foale's Arrishes, Devon *Radford 1952, 71–3*
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 Forest Hill, Wilts. *Corney 1997*
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 Great Chesterford, Essex *Stead 1971a, 278*
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Handley Down, Dorset *Pitt Rivers 1898*

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Hardingstone, Northants *Woods 1969*

Harehope (Peebles.), Borders Region *Feachem 1962*

Harlow, Essex *France and Gobel 1985; Haselgrove 1989*

Harlyn Bay, Cornwall *Crawford 1921; Whimster 1978*

Harpenden, Herts. *Bagshawe 1928; Stead 1971a*

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Harrow Hill (Sussex), West Sussex *Holleyman 1937; Manning 1995*

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Harting Beacon (Sussex), West Sussex *Bedwin 1978a, 1979, 1983*

Hascombe, Surrey *F.H. Thompson 1979*

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Heathery Burn Cave, Co. Durham *Inv. Arch. GB 55 (1968); Britton 1971*

- Heathrow (Middx.), Greater London *Grimes* 1961; *Grimes and Close Brooks* 1993
- Hembury, Devon *Liddell* 1930, 1931, 1932, 1935a; *Todd* 1984
- Hengistbury Head (Hants), Dorset *Bushe-Fox* 1915; *Cunliffe* 1987
- Hertford Heath, Herts. *Holmes and Frend* 1959; *Hüssen* 1983
- Hesterton (Yorks.), North Yorks. *Powlesland, Haughton and Hanson* 1986
- High Cross, Leics. *Fox* 1958, pl. 3
- Highdown (Sussex), West Sussex *Wilson* 1940, 1950
- Highfield, Wilts. *Stevens* 1934
- High Knowes (Alnham), Northumberland *Jobey and Tait* 1966
- High Penard (Glam.), West Glamorgan *Williams* 1941
- High Rocks (Sussex), East Sussex *Money* 1941, 1960, 1968
- Hinderclay, Suffolk *Balkwill* 1979
- Hobarrow Bay, Dorset *Galkin* 1949
- Hod Hill, Dorset *Richmond* 1968
- Hog Cliff Hill, Dorset *Bowen and Fowler* 1966; *Ellison and Rahtz* 1987
- Hogsthorpe, Lincs. *Kirkham* 1981
- Holcombe, Devon *Fox* 1972; *Fox and Pollard* 1973; *Pollard* 1974
- Hollingbury (Sussex), East Sussex *Toms* 1914; *Curwen* 1932; *Hamilton* 1984; *Holmes* 1984
- Holmbury, Surrey *F.H. Thompson* 1979
- Holme Pierrepont, Notts. *Musty and MacGormick* 1973
- Hornchurch, Essex *Guttmann and Last* 2000
- Horndean, Hants *Cunliffe* 1961
- Horsehope (Peebles.), Borders Region *S. Piggott* 1955
- Horsted Keynes (Sussex), West Sussex *Hardy and Curwen* 1937
- Houghton Down, Hants *Cunliffe and Poole* 2000f
- Howe (Orkney), Orkney Islands Area *Carter, Haigh, Neil and Ballin Smith* 1984; *Ballin Smith* 1994
- Hownam Rings (Roxburgh.), Borders Region *C.M. Piggott* 1950
- Huckhoe, Northumberland *Jobey* 1959
- Hunmanby (Yorks.), North Yorkshire *Sheppard* 1907; *Stead* 1965
- Hunsbury, Northants *Fell* 1937; *Jackson* 1994
- Huntow (Yorks.), Humberside *Stead* 1965, 111
- Hurstbourne Tarrant, Hants *Hawkes and Dunning* 1931
- Iffley, Oxon. *Savory* 1939
- Ilchester, Somerset. *Leach and Thew* 1985
- Ingleborough (Yorks.), North Yorkshire *Bowden, Mackay and Blood* 1989
- Ingoldmells, Lincs. *Swinnerton* 1932; *Baker* 1960
- Ingram Hill, Northumberland *Hogg* 1942, 1956; *Jobey* 1971c
- Ipswich, Suffolk *Owles* 1969, 1971; *Brailsford and Stapley* 1972
- Isleham, Cambs. *Britton* 1960

Itford Hill (Sussex), East Sussex *Burstow and Holleyman 1957; Holden 1972; Ellison 1978*

Ivinghoe Beacon, Bucks. *Cotton and Frere 1968*

Ivy Chimneys, Witham, Essex *Turner 1982*

Ixworth, Suffolk *Clarke 1939*

Jarlshof (Shetland), Shetland Islands Area *Hamilton 1956*

Kaimes Hill (Midlothian), Lothian Region *Childe 1941; Simpson 1969*

Kemble (West Lane), Glos. *King, Barber and Timby 1997*

Kempston, Fosters Pit, Beds. *Simco 1973*

Kendall (Yorks.), Humberside *Brewster 1963*

Kennel Hall Knowe, Northumberland *Jobey 1978*

Kestor (Chagford), Devon *Fox 1955*

Kilham (Yorks.), Humberside *Brewster 1963*

Killibury, Cornwall *Miles et al. 1978*

Kilphedir (Sutherland), Highland Region *Fairhurst and Taylor 1974*

Kimmeridge, Dorset *H. Davies 1936; Calkin 1949; Cunliffe 1968b*

Kimpton, Hants *Dacre and Ellison 1981*

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Kingston Brill (Sussex), West Sussex *Curwen, Curwen and Hawkes 1931*

Kirkburn (Yorks.), Humberside *Stead 1991a*

Kirkby La Thorpe, Lincs. *Bonnor and Allen 2000*

Knap Hill, Wilts. *Cunnington and Goddard 1934*

Knave, the (Glam.), West Glamorgan *Williams 1939a*

Knighton Hill (Berks.), Oxon. *Piggott 1927*

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Ladle Hill, Hants *Piggott 1931*

Lancing Down (Sussex), West Sussex *Bedwin 1981*

Langenhoe, Essex *Ward Perkins 1938*

Langford Downs, Oxon. *Williams 1947*

Langton (Yorks.), North Yorks. *Corder and Kirk 1932*

Latch Farm (Hants), Dorset *Piggott 1938b*

Lechlade (Rough Ground Farm), Glos. *Allen, Darvill, Green and Jones 1993*

Leckhampton, Glos. *Burrow, Paine, Knowles and Gray 1925; Champion 1972, 1976*

Leckie Broch (Stirlingshire) Central Region *MacKie 1982, 1990*

Ledston (Yorks.), West Yorks. *West Yorks. CC 1981*

Legis Tor, Devon *Baring-Gould 1896; Worth 1943*

Leicester, Leics. *Clay 1977*

Leigh Hill (Cobham), Surrey *Smith 1908, 1909b*

Lesser Garth Cave (Glam.), South Glamorgan *Grimes 1951*

Levisham Moor (Yorks.), North Yorks. *Spratt 1982*

Lexden, Essex *Lay 1927; Foster 1986*

- Lidbury, Wilts. *Cunnington and Cunnington* 1917
 Lincoln, Lincs. *Darling and Jones* 1988
 Lindow, Cheshire *Stead and Turner* 1985; *Stead, Bourke and Brothwell*
1986
 Lingwood, Cambs. *Evans* 1998
 Linton, Cambs. *Fell* 1953
 Little Horstead Lane (Sussex), West Sussex *Wilson* 1954
 Little Solisbury (Som.), Avon *Dowden* 1957, 1962; *Falconer and Adams* 1935
 Little Waltham, Essex *Drury* 1978
 Little Woodbury, Wilts. *Bersu* 1940; *Brailsford* 1948, 1949
 Llanfair (Denbigh.), Clwyd *E.L.B.* 1862
 Llangenydd, Culver Hole Cave (Glam.), West Glamorgan *Grimes*
1951, 110
 Llanmelin (Mon.), Gwent *Nash-Williams* 1933b
 Llanstephan Castle (Carm.), Dyfed *Guilbert* 1974
 Llanymynech hillfort, Powys *Musson and Northover* 1989
 Llwyn Bryn-Dinas, Clwyd *Musson et al.* 1992
 Llwyn du Bach (Caerns.), Gwynedd *Bersu and Griffiths* 1949
 Llyn Cerrig Bach (Anglesey), Gwynedd *Fox* 1946
 Llyn Fawr (Glam.), West Glamorgan *Fox and Hyde* 1939; *Crawford and Wheeler* 1921; *Green* 1985
 Loch Broom (Dun an Ruigh Ruaidh) (Ross and Cromarty), Highlands Region *MacKie* 1980
 Loch na Beirgh, Riof (Lewis), Western Isles Islands Area *Harding and Gilmour* 2000
 Loch of Hunter, Whalsey (Shetland), Shetland Islands Area *Hamilton*
1968
 Lofts Farm, Essex *Brown* 1988
 Longbridge Deverill (Cow Down), Wilts. *S.C. Hawkes* 1961, 1995
 Long Wittenham (Berks.), Oxon. *Savory* 1937
 Lydney, Glos. *Wheeler and Wheeler* 1932
 Lyneham Camp, Oxon. *Bayne* 1957
 Maen Castle, Cornwall *Cotton* 1959
 Maiden Castle (Bickerton), Cheshire *Varley* 1935, 1936; *Taylor* 1981
 Maiden Castle, Dorset *Wheeler* 1943; *Sharples* 1991a, 1991b
 Mam Tor, Derbyshire *Coombs and Thompson* 1980
 Mancombe Down, Wilts. *Fowler, Musty and Taylor* 1965
 Marlborough, Wilts. *Fox* 1958, 69; *Stead* 1971a, 279
 Marnhull, Dorset *Williams* 1951a
 Marros Mountain, Pendine (Carm.), Dyfed *Grimes* 1951
 Martin Down Camp, Dorset *Pitt Rivers* 1898
 Meare, Somerset. *Bulleid and Gray* 1948, 1953; *Avery* 1968; *Coles* 1987; *Orme, Coles and Silvester* 1983; *Orme, Coles and Sturdy* 1979;

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 Melksham, Wilts. *Gingell* 1979
 Meon Hill, Hants *Liddell* 1933, 1935b
 Merthyr Mawr Warren (Glam.), Mid Glamorgan *Grimes* 1951, 126–8
 Micheldever Wood, Hants *Fasham* 1976, 1987
 Midsummer Hill (Heref.), Heref. and Worcs. *Stanford* 1981; *Bowden* 2001
 Milber Down Camp, Devon *Fox, Radford, Rogers and Shorter* 1952
 Mildenhall, Suffolk *Clarke* 1939, 43
 Mill Hill, Deal, Kent *Stebbing* 1934; *Parfitt* 1995
 Milton Loch (Kirkcudbright.), Dumfries and Galloway Region C.M. *Piggott* 1955; *Guido* 1974
 Minchinhampton, Glos. *Clifford* 1961, 157
 Mingies Ditch, Oxon. *Allen and Robinson* 1992
 Minnis Bay, Kent *Worsfold* 1943
 Minster Ditch, Oxford, Oxon. *Jope* 1961b
 Moel Hiraddug (Flint.), Clwyd *Hemp* 1928; *Brassil, Gilbert et al.* 1982
 Moel Trigarn (Pembs.), Dyfed *Baring-Gould, Burnard and Anderson*
- 1900
 Moel y Gaer (Flint.), Clwyd *Guilbert* 1973, 1975b, 1976
 Monifieth, the Laws of (Angus), Tayside Region *Neish and Stuart*
- 1860
 Mortlake (Middx.), Greater London *Unpublished: London Museum*
 Moulton Park, Northants *Williams* 1974
 Mount Batten, Devon *Bates* 1871; *Clarke* 1971; *Cunliffe* 1988b
 Mount Bures (Essex), Suffolk *Smith* 1852
 Mount Farm, Oxon. *Myres* 1937; *Lambrick* 1979, 1981
 Mousa (Shetland), Shetland Islands Area *Fojut* 1982a
 Mucking, Essex *Jones* 1974; *Jones and Bond* 1980
 Muntham Court (Sussex), West Sussex *Unpublished excavation*
 Mynydd Bychan (Glam.), West Glamorgan *Savory* 1954, 1956
 Needwood, Staffs. *Leeds* 1933b
 Ness of Burgi, Sumburgh (Shetland), Shetland Islands Area *Hamilton* 1968; *Carter, McCullagh and MacSween* 1995
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 Newark-on-Trent, Notts. *Inv. Arch. GB* 36 (1958)
 New Barn Down (Sussex), West Sussex *Curwen* 1934a
 Newbridge (East Lothian), Lothian Region *Carter and Hunter* 2003
 New Buildings, Hants *Cunliffe and Poole* 2000d
 Newhaven (Sussex), East Sussex, *see* Castle Hill, Newhaven
 Newnham Croft, Cambs. *Fox* 1923, 81
 Norbury, Glos. *Saville* 1983
 Norse Road, Bedford, Beds. *Edgeworth* 2001
 North Cave (Yorks.), East Yorks. *Dent* 1989

- North Creake, Norfolk *Clarke 1951a*
 North Ferriby (Yorks.), Humberside *Corder and Pryce 1938*
 North Grimston (Yorks.), North Yorks. *Mortimer 1905; Stead 1965,*
 111
 Northwick, Avon *Gardener et al. 2002*
 Norton Fitzwarren, Somerset *Langmaid 1971*
 Oare, Wilts. M.E. *Cunnington 1909*
 Ogbourne Down, Wilts. *Piggott 1942*
 Ogbury, Wilts. *Crawford and Keiller 1928*
 Oldbury, Kent *Ward Perkins 1944; Thompson 1978, 1984, 1985*
 Oldbury, Wilts. *H. Cunnington 1871*
 Old Down Farm, Hants *Davies 1981*
 Old Oswestry, Salop *Varley 1950b*
 Old Scatness, Sumburgh (Shetland), Shetland Islands Area *Turner and Dockrill 2002*
 Old Sleaford, Lincs. *Elsdon 1997*
 Old Warden, Beds. *Dryden 1845; Spratling 1970*
 Oliver's Camp, Wilts. *Cunnington 1908*
 Orams Arbour, Winchester, Hants *Whinney 1994*
 Orsett Cock, Essex *Hedges and Buckley 1978; Carter 1998*
 Orton Longueville, Northants *Dallas 1975; Mackreth 2001*
 Overton Down, Wilts. *Fowler 1967*
 Owslebury, Hants *Collis 1968, 1970*
 Pagan's Hill (Som.), Avon *ApSimon, Rahtz and Harris 1958*
 Parc Cynnog (Carm.), Dyfed *Quincey 1970*
 Parc y Meirch (Denbigh.), Clwyd *Sheppard 1941*
 Park Brow (Sussex), West Sussex *Smith 1927; Hawley 1927*
 Park Farm, Barford, Warwicks. *Cracknell and Hingley 1994*
 Parkle Lane, Somersham, Cambs. *Unpublished: Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography, Cambridge*
 Paulsgrove, Portsmouth, Hants *Unpublished excavation*
 Pembrey Mountain (Carms.), Dyfed *C. Williams 1981*
 Penbryn (Cardigan.), Dyfed *E.L.B. 1862*
 Pen Dinas, Aberystwyth (Cardigan.), Dyfed *Forde, Griffiths, Hogg and Houlder 1963; Brown and Driver 2001*
 Penigent Gill (Yorks.), North Yorks. *W.B. 1938*
 Pen y Coed, Llangynog (Carms.), Dyfed *Murphy 1985*
 Pen y Corddyn (Denbigh.), Clwyd *Gardner 1910*
 Percy Rigg (Yorks.), North Yorks. *Close 1972*
 Pexton Moor (Yorks.), North Yorks. *Stead 1965, 95*
 Pierowall (Orkney), Orkney Islands Area *Sharples 1984*
 Pilsdon Pen, Dorset *Gelling 1970, 1971, 1972 and 1977; Thackray*
 1983
 Pimperne Down, Dorset *Harding, Blake and Reynolds 1993*

Plaitford, Hants *Preston and Hawkes* 1933
 Plumpton Plain (Sussex), East Sussex *Holleyman and Curwen* 1935
 Pokesdown (Hants), Dorset *Clay* 1927a
 Portesham, Dorset *Fitzpatrick* 1996a
 Portfield, Lancs. *Longworth* 1968
 Porthmeor, Cornwall *Hirst* 1936
 Portland, Dorset *Taylor* 2001
 Portsdown Hill, Hants *Bradley* 1969a
 Poston (Heref.), Heref. and Worcs. *Anthony* 1958
 Potterne, Wilts. *Lawson* 2000
 Poundbury, Dorset *Richardson* 1940
 Poxwell, Dorset *Wacher* 1968
 Prae Wood Cemetery (Verulamium), Herts. *Stead* 1969
 Preshute Down, Wilts. *Piggott* 1942
 Puckeridge, Herts., *see* Broughing
 Puddlehill, Beds. *Matthews* 1976
 Quanterness (Orkney), Orkney Islands Area *Renfrew* 1979
 Quarley Hill, Hants *Hawkes* 1939b; *Cunliffe and Poole* 2000g
 Quarry Wood Camp, Kent *Kelly* 1971 Radley (Berks.), Oxon. *Leeds* 1931b, 1935
 Rahoy, Morvern (Argyll.), Strathclyde Region *Childe and Thorneycroft* 1938
 Rainsborough Camp, Northants *Avery, Sutton and Banks* 1968
 Rams Hill (Berks.), Oxon. *Piggott and Piggott* 1940; *Bradley and Ellison* 1975; *Needham and Ambers* 1994
 Ratlinghope/Stitt Hill, Salop *Guilbert* 1975c
 Ravensburgh Castle, Herts. *Dyer* 1970, 1976b
 Ravenstone, Bucks. *Mynard* 1970
 Reading Business Park, Berks. *Moore and Jennings* 1992
 Read's Cavern, Som. *Palmer* 1922, 1923; *Langford* 1924, 1925
 Rider's Rings, Devon *Worth* 1935
 Rigg's Farm (Yorks.), Humberside *Brewster* 1963, *Figure 81*
 Rillington (Yorks.), North Yorks. *Turnbull* 1983
 Ringstead, Norfolk *Clarke* 1951b
 Rippon Tor, Dartmoor, Devon *Fox* 1955
 Rispain Camp, Whithorn (Galloway), Dumfries and Galloway Region A. and G. *Haggarty* 1983
 Rock Castle, Gilling West (Yorks.), North Yorks. *Fitts et al.* 1994
 Roomer Common (Yorks.), North Yorks. *Waterman, Kent and Stickland* 1954
 Rotherley Down, Wilts. *Pitt Rivers* 1888
 Roxby (Yorks.), North Yorks. *Spratt* 1982; *Inman, Brown, Goddard and Spratt* 1985
 Ructstalls Hill, Hants *Oliver and Apflin* 1978

- Rudston (Yorks.), Humberside *Stead* 1971b, 1991a
- Rumps, the (St Minver), Cornwall *Brooks* 1974
- Runnymede Bridge, Surrey *Needham and Longley* 1980; *Needham* 1992, 2000
- Ryton-on-Dunsmore, Warks. *Bateman* 1978
- St Catharine's Hill, Hants *Hawkes, Myres and Stevens* 1930; *Hawkes* 1976
- St David's Head (Pembs.), Dyfed *Baring-Gould, Burnard and Enys* 1899
- St George's Hill (Weybridge), Surrey *Lowther* 1949
- St Ives (Hunts.), Cambs. *Unpublished: St Ives Museum*
- St Lawrence, Isle of Wight, Hants *Stead* 1968, *Figure 19*
- St Martha's Hill, Surrey *Lowther* 1935
- St Mawgan, see Carloggas, Cornwall
- Saham Toney (Woodcock Hill), Norfolk *Brown* 1986
- Salmonby, Lincs. *Elsdon* 1996
- Salmonsbury, Glos. *Dunning* 1931, 1976; *O'Neil* 1978; *Rawes* 1984
- Saltdean (Sussex), East Sussex *Curwen* 1954
- Sandown Park (Esher), Surrey *Burchell and Frere* 1947
- Sandy, Beds. *Unpublished: Bedford Museum*
- Santon Downham, Suffolk *Smith* 1909a
- Sawdon (Yorks.), North Yorks. *Stead* 1965
- Scarborough, see Castle Hill, Yorks.
- Scatness, Sumburgh (Shetland) Shetland Islands Area *Carter, McCullagh and MacSween* 1995
- Scorborough Park (Yorks.), Humberside *Mortimer* 1895; *Stead* 1975
- Sedgford, Norfolk *Brailsford* 1971
- Selsey (Sussex), West Sussex *White* 1934; *Curwen* 1954, 257-8; *Aldsworth* 1988
- Shapwick Heath, Som. *Gray* 1940
- Shaugh Moor, Devon *Wainwright, Fleming and Smith* 1979; *Smith, Goppen, Wainwright and Beckett* 1981; *Wainwright and Smith* 1980; *Balaam, Smith and Wainwright* 1982
- Shearplace Hill, Dorset *Rahtz and ApSimon* 1962
- Sheepen Hill (Colchester), Essex (see also Camulodunum) *Hawkes and Smith* 1957, 161; *Sealey* 1985.
- Sheepsleights, Dorset *Calkin* 1949
- Shenbarrow, Glos. *Fell* 1962
- Shorncote, Glos. *Hearne and Heaton* 1995
- Shouldham, Norfolk *Clarke and Hawkes* 1955
- Sidbury, Wilts. *Applebaum* 1955; *Bradley, Entwistle and Raymond* 1994
- Silchester, Hants see Calleva
- Silkstead, Hants *Denford* 1993

- Skelmore Heads (Lancs.), Cumbria *Powell* 1963
- Sleaford, Lincs., *see* Old Sleaford
- Slonk Hill, East Sussex *Hartridge* 1978
- Snailwell, Cambs. *Lethbridge* 1953
- Snettisham, Norfolk *Clarke* 1955; *Burns* 1971; *Stead* 1991b, 1993
- Sollas, North Uist (Outer Hebrides), Western Isles Islands Area
Campbell 1992
- Sompting (Sussex), West Sussex *E.C. Curwen* 1948
- South Cadbury, Somerset *Alcock* 1980; *Barrett, Freeman and Woodward* 2000
- Southcote, Berks. *Piggott and Seaby* 1937
- South Ferriby (Lincs.), Humberside *Hawkes* 1964
- South Lodge Camp, Dorset *Pitt Rivers* 1898; *Barrett, Bradley and Green* 1991
- South Wilson, Bucks. *Unpublished: Aylesbury Museum*
- Spettisbury, Dorset *Gresham* 1939
- Standlake, Oxon. *Akerman and Stone* 1857; *Bradford* 1942a; *Riley* 1947
- Standrop Rigg, Northumberland *Jobey* 1983
- Stanfordbury, Beds. *Dryden* 1845
- Stannon Down, St Breward, Cornwall *Mercer* 1970
- Stanstead, Essex *Brooks* 1993
- Stanton Down, Devon *Baring-Gould* 1902
- Stanton Harcourt, Oxon. *Grimes* 1944; *Williams* 1951b
- Stanway, Essex *Crummy* 1992, 1997
- Stanwick (Yorks.), North Yorks. *Wheeler* 1954; *Chadburn* 1983; *Turnbull* 1984; *Haselgrove and Turnbull* 1983, 1985, 1987; *Haselgrove et al.* 1991
- Staple Howe (Yorks.), North Yorks. *Brewster* 1963
- Staxton (Yorks.), North Yorks. *Brewster* 1963, *figure* 91
- Steyping (Sussex), West Sussex *Burstow* 1958
- Stoke Clump (Sussex), West Sussex *Cunliffe* 1966
- Strixton, Northants *Hall* 1971
- Sudbrook (Mon.), Gwent *Nash-Williams* 1939
- Suddern Farm, Hants *Cunliffe and Poole* 2000c
- Sumburgh (Shetland) Shetland Islands Area *Downes and Lamb* 2000
- Sutton, Notts. *Fox* 1958
- Sutton Common (Yorks.), South Yorks. *Parker Pearson and Sydes* 1997
- Sutton Walls (Heref.), Heref. and Worcs. *Kenyon* 1954
- Swallowcliffe Down, Wilts. *Clay* 1925, 1927b
- Swarling, Kent *Bushe-Fox* 1925
- Syon Reach (Middx.), Greater London *Wheeler* 1929
- Tallington, Lincs. *Simpson* 1966

- Tal y Llyn (Merioneth.), Gwynedd *Savory 1964; Spratling 1966*
 Tasborough, Norfolk *Davies et al. 1992*
 Tattershall Bridge, Lincs. *Piggott 1959*
 Tattershall Thorpe, Lincs. *Chowne, Girling and Greig 1986; Seager Smith 1998*
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 Theale, Berks. *Piggott 1938a*
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Abbreviations

[See Table](#)

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